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THE HARVEST
OF RUSKIN

THE HARVEST OF RUSKIN

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PREFACE

THIS book is concerned with Ruskin's teaching in the departments of Religion and Economics only, including his social reforms and educational schemes. It leaves out all his work on Art and in Natural History and Mineralogy. His thoughts on Beauty in Landscape are treated only so far as that Beauty is damaged by Industrialism or by War. Nor has any attempt been made to produce an analysis of his literary style or styles. The long extracts which the plan of the book requires, however, afford sufficient examples of his artistry in words.

My aim is to give a critical estimate in a reverent spirit of Ruskin's teaching in these two departments, and to apply it to the needs of our own time.

The development of Ruskin's religious faith

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Preface

and its final outcome have not, I believe, been fully worked out before, and the reconciliation which I have attempted in the region of Economics is long overdue. These parts of the book have been delivered as lectures in past years under the Manchester and Liverpool University Extension Committees, at Summer Schools, and elsewhere.

I am indebted to Ruskin's literary executors for permission to quote freely from his works.

J. W. G.

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CHAPTER I

THE SIGNS OF A PROPHET

NOW that one hundred years have gone by since their one precious boy was born in London to a Scottish wine merchant and his wife, it may be well to ask how much of Ruskin's teaching has proved to be chaff which the wind driveth away, and how much has been precious seed. Ruskin is just now suffering from the time of comparative neglect which intervenes between an author's contemporaries and posterity, the years when the immediate appropriateness of his message may have lapsed, when it is no longer fresh and startling, but its permanent value has not yet been settled by the verdict of several generations. All or nearly all the great Victorians are in like case.

Ruskin's art criticism is, as a matter of fact, not only ignored but resolutely rejected nowadays

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among critical writers. He loved beauty and charm in subject ; he rejected scenes of horror and torture, and also subjects of mere Dutch commonplace. He loved delicate and accurately minute drawing, and the realistic detail of the Preraphaelites. He desired that a tree in a picture should be recognized as an oak or a birch ; and he loved above all fine drawing of mosses, leaves, and peacocks' wings. This is the day of impressionism, super-impressionism and impression of impressionism, and so on, through ever greater abandonment of drawing and significance, to cubism, futurism and other weird follies. I am not wishful to dogmatize on these matters ; I incline to the sage and wonderful conclusion that all styles are good provided they are good styles ; that conscientiousness in the portrayal of what the artist really sees will not lead him astray ; that originality, or at any rate a marked individual gift, is a necessity ; and that there is no one orthodox school. As in everything else, the letter killeth, convention blocks progress, and slovenliness includes a multitude of sins.

But this book is not concerned with art criticism, but with the teaching about human duty and happiness, to which Ruskin's art

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interests led him. The characteristic note he contributed to art criticism was to regard art as a revelation of God and of Man. He was a prophet of Beauty from his birth. Concerning his susceptibility in childhood to the power of natural Beauty, he writes in the third volume of *Modern Painters*,¹ in words which throw light upon his special gifts of temperament :
“ Although there was no definite religious sentiment mingled with it, there was a continual perception of sanctity in the whole of Nature, from the slightest thing to the vastest ; an instinctive awe, mixed with delight ; an indefinable thrill, such as we sometimes imagine to indicate the presence of a disembodied spirit. I could only feel this perfectly when I was alone ; and then it would often make me shiver from head to foot from the joy and fear of it, when, after being some time away from the hills, I first got to the shore of a mountain river, where the brown water circled among the pebbles, or when I first saw the swell of distant land against the sunset, or the first low broken wall covered with mountain moss. I cannot in the least describe the feeling ; but I do not think this is my fault, nor that of the English language,

¹ Chap. xiv. § 19.

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for I am afraid no feeling is describable. If we had to explain even the sense of bodily hunger to a person who had never felt it, we should be hard put to it for words ; and the joy in nature seemed to me to come of a sort of heart-hunger, satisfied with the presence of a Great and Holy Spirit. These feelings remained in their full intensity till I was eighteen or twenty, and then, as the reflective and practical power increased, and the ' cares of the world ' gained upon me, faded gradually away, in the manner described by Wordsworth in his *Intimations of Immortality*."

The fact is that we are dealing with a man who belongs to the prophetic order : and this book is written in the belief that he was not only a prophet for the nineteenth, but also for the twentieth century. He has all the prophetic signs. Right or wrong, fantastic or terribly truthful, we feel that he is coining his soul into golden words. The stress and strain of his cry against priesthoods, modern business, false teaching of economics as he thought it, wore him out, and left him subject to attacks of inflammation of the brain. Rightly he spoke of *Fors Clavigera* as the book of his life ; " best worth calling a book," he said, of anything

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he had written. With it his serious work ended in 1884. Only the chatty reminiscences of *Præterita* were to be written after that.

He had, besides a dreadful sincerity, another mark of the true afflatus. Never, as he pleaded, had he written a line for money or for the glory of self. It was the wrong done to Turner that drove him to write *Modern Painters*; the necessity of character in a nation was the lesson he had to teach in tracing the history of Venice in her monuments; the cry of the poor, and indignation over the wrecking of humanity in the name of business, drove him to write *Unto This Last*, and all his social and economic works. He had the single-mindedness of the seer.

Again, he inspired love and discipleship in hearts ready for his message, as prophets do. The Master he was called, and the Master he remains. His loss was a personal loss. The event of January 20, 1900, was to many of us a real bereavement. The strong personal note which caused the prophets Isaiah and Hosea to do in their own persons emblematic acts for a sign, caused Ruskin also to tell his readers more about himself than anyone would who did not identify himself with his message. To

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the unseeing eye this looks like egotism, but it is far from that.

His life, too, was such as a prophet's ought to be. He gave away the greater part of a fortune of £157,000, and some house property, and chose to do without advertising his books. In love and in the loss of love he suffered, but did nothing base, everything that was kind and true. As a prophet whose burden was wealth and poverty, social tyranny and human wreckage, he was able to speak as a rich man to members of his own class. A poor man who prophesies on this subject is apt to be discounted by blunt humanity, who think that he may be merely an envious grumbler.

And, once again, he has that characteristic of the messengers of the Truth, that their message is too new and strange to be acceptable at once to their contemporaries. They are accepted by the few : the world smiles or curses and passes by, but gradually it bends round in one of its great curves, and round its spiral path revolves as it approaches the centre of attraction. I shall try to show that much of Ruskin's social and economic teaching is just such a centre of our constant approximation, though we are apparently always going nearly at right angles to it.

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Here, then, we have every sign of the prophetic character : fidelity to the deepest motives of the soul, an inevitable and generally unconscious selflessness, the loyalty of his followers, his frank openness to the world, his consecrated life and holy sorrow, the antagonisms he evoked and the contempt of the proud, and the clear influence he is exerting—these, all together, are prophetic.

Let us examine his outward qualifications. Ruskin's judgment was at times erratic ; his playfulness and his petulance prevent our taking everything he said with prosaic seriousness ; he was not always able to speak in measured tones of sober exactness, but gave way to exaggeration. But his intellectual equipment was of the best. He was heir both to Greece and to Judæa. The Bible was his text-book and Plato was his political teacher. All culture was at his command. Oxford, Geneva, Rome, Venice, the Alps, the Apennines and the Lake of Coniston had yielded up their best to him. He prophesied from no street corner—from the Sheldonian Theatre in the University of Oxford his message was uttered.

So much for the signs and for the outward qualifications of the seer. The prophet's fire

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is recognizably there. The tabernacle of God is with men, as of old ; and if He is to speak with a clear Word to our hasting age, to preach righteousness, purity, work to the idle and rest to the weary, clean cities, and clean hearts, how else would He preach than with the text of Ruskin : “ Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow ; they toil not, neither do they spin ; and yet I say unto you that your millionaires in all their glory of machines cannot supply to us the loss of these.”

At the age of forty-one, about the time when the mind reaches maturity, begin the social teachings of John Ruskin in full completeness—not to be much changed, except in one particular, for the quarter of a century of writing that was left him. The live coal from off the altar came to him as he was wandering in restless suffering among the valleys of Savoy, and his first “ Thus saith the Lord ” was written at Chamonix. Not that all this came at once. The growth can be traced ; but before 1860 he was chiefly an art critic, and in that year the last volume of *Modern Painters* appeared.

Let us look at the advantages of the delay. They were manifold. A man should do some-

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thing else besides prophesy. He should win his position, take his rank among men, in some walk of life, before he is quite qualified to tell others how to order their steps. He has a degree to take in something besides homiletics. It was from the pulpit of a great literary reputation that the author of *Modern Painters* opened his mouth to preach. That reputation he was content utterly to throw away ; to tread on it, step upon it as upon a ladder, that from the top of it he might be heard when he spoke the words the Spirit taught him. That was the great renunciation of his literary life. What a refusal of a call it would have been had he hugged his reputation, been careful of his influence, that last temptation of noble minds. It is politicians who do that, not prophets. But these know the glorious liberty into which they come.

No doubt any other professional career would have ended with a message. What an explosion might have occurred in the Church had his mother's wish been fulfilled, and he become a clergyman, with a Bishop to look after him. As it was, his father's art tastes and preoccupation with pictures and with picturesque scenery, and the boy's own early skill

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both as writer and draughtsman, led him, after an attempt at poetry, to become by profession a writer on Art. There he had the opportunity of elaborating his mighty implement, that superb, facile, plastic instrument of music and voice of thunder, his inimitable style. It is that which ensures the preservation of his work. Noble style is the antiseptic which preserves from decay the written words of men. Books without style are not read long.

In classifying the books in our libraries, under what head shall we place the seventy volumes of John Ruskin? There is much temptation to fall back helplessly upon the heading "Miscellaneous"; for he wrote on Art, including Sculpture, Engraving, Architecture and Heraldry; on Economics, History and constructive Politics; on Botany, Meteorology, Ornithology, Geology, and Mineralogy; he wrote Guide-books, Poems, Autobiography, Literary Criticism; he treated Theology, Ethics, Education, Music and Mythology; he brought out regularly for seven years a monthly periodical *de omnibus rebus et quibusdam aliis*; he edited Biography, German stories and translations from the Greek and the Italian: he wrote Dialogue and Fairy Tale.

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Where shall we seek for unity in this manifold outpouring of a versatile genius, who touched none of these subjects without irradiating it? In that fact lies our key. With what did he irradiate this comprehensive list of human interests? The answer cannot be doubtful in the mind of any careful student. He told us how it seemed to him that all these things looked to the eye of God. He tried to solve all questions by the flashlight of the Eternal. He worked at agate and crystal that it might reveal the beauty of the Lord; he fought his social crusade for the sake of the dim disinherited multitude who had no eyes for the Divine loveliness, and no glory to behold: and for the sake of justice and of love which wealth and luxury denied. He was a messenger of the Most High to modern needs; and his eager soul found a service throughout this wide range of science and art.

Not one of his writings is called a sermon, yet we have found his class, for he belongs to the class of Divines, ordained in a temple more Metropolitan and more Catholic than Canterbury or Rome, and not made with hands. Through nearly half a century of active authorship he consecrated his every gift to the service

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of men. He never looked back in any unfaithfulness that we know of. I wish first to make clear that all his life the gates between the soul and the Divine Source were open : that he was truly a religious man under every form of faith and doubt ; and that no one need hesitate about this at any tight place in his career. Keep this as a sure clue, and we shall fearlessly follow his story.

The childish sensibility to landscape beauty I take to be an early manifestation of the gift of the seer, a significant token of native nearness to the Unseen. For many years he never climbed a mountain, alone, without instinctively dropping on his knees on the summit, in thankful reverence. As the careless foot of an engrossing industrialism stamped into ashes more and more of the land whose fairness had been his life's passion, it seemed to him to be indeed sacrilege and desecration, a reckless destruction of Divine things. Art he only valued as a form of expression, a language whose subject was Nature and Man. In the latter half of his life more emphatically, but more or less from the beginning, he regarded Man as the object for whose welfare Nature, in the landscape sense, existed ; and he rested not

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till he had brought Man into due relation with God, up to whom in the end came all things.

He was devout by training. Morning and evening he read his chapter out of the Bible ; and the fourteenth century manuscript he used in later years occupied a prominent and handy place in the study at Brantwood. In Swiss and Italian villages in his early journeys he read the service through on Sunday to his servant, when there was no Protestant Church. From the Biblical references in the indexes to his works, you would suppose they were a theological library. In his Oxford Lectures Art was the illustration, but conduct the theme, and Art was chosen as an illustration because in it the artist shows what manner of Man he is, in a way that cannot be dissembled.

What are the qualifications which fit a man to be a religious researcher, a mountain-top gazer into heaven ?

He must know from his own experience the meaning of holiness, thereby gaining a practical knowledge of God. He must, in Pauline words, be crucified with Christ, though he may not care for such an expression ; he must preach not himself and please not himself. Such a man John Ruskin was. Among the many

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wayward and impulsive men who have been "dear to the Muses and to the nymphs not unbeloved," not all like him have been also masters of themselves, and kept on their foreheads the white stone, with the new name written. Ruskin was himself noble and sweet in his life, a man of sorrows, well acquainted with grief endured in silence, with nothing ignoble in his eighty years of generous charity and lonely service. He had passed, too, through that experience which seems essential to the wielding of spiritual power. He had had his great renunciation, he had heard some hard call, and had obeyed. The prophets have all gone on the Via Crucis : they have all lost their lives that they might find them. As Whittier abandoned a hopeful political career and remained poor till he was sixty that he might help to free the slave, and gained his spiritual power thereby, so Ruskin in 1860 went boldly out to do battle with the Society that loved and honoured him.

Further, such a man must greatly dare. He must face the demon of the study first ; then, too probably, the resentment of organized religion. One cannot succeed as a researcher without discovering something new ; and that is bound

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to modify or overthrow something old and established.

Nor can such a man usually present a heart of iron and a front of brass to the darts of controversy. He must be a sensitive man, by the very nature of his research. He may or may not be privileged to feel strong in the strength of his cause ; but even if he does the shrinking of the nerves remains. This daring and suffering were pre-eminently the lot of Ruskin ; and it was this which finally broke down his mind. " He was beside himself for others' sakes." It was the neglect with which the St. George's Guild and allied reform work were treated by those who were otherwise his friends, which contributed to drive him into inflammation of the brain in 1878, and again several times afterwards. " Wounded in the house of my friends."

Besides these essential qualifications Ruskin had his very unusual gifts, which it may be long before we find again combined with the religious faculty—his long lifetime free from the need of earning money, his early popularity, his wonderful style, the vantage ground of his Professorial chair, his penetrating mind, his wit and his fire. It may be long before we see his like again.

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I am far from claiming infallibility for Ruskin. Infallibility is an out-of-date conception altogether. There is no such thing on earth. To be infallible you must know everything ; you must be infinite. The infallibility of a finite creature is an inhuman, even an inorganic conception. Organic life means growth, and growth means imperfection ; but growth is Nature's way of making things. Infallibility is a tyrant born of ecclesiasticism, and bred on human laziness and fear. It has become the attribute of the quack pill, and there let it abide.

But, beyond this safe generality, Ruskin had human weaknesses of an obvious kind. He loved paradox ; he played with his thunderbolts a little, and rather liked to shock people. He was a humorist as well as a divine. It is difficult to put down some of his derivations to anything but sheer fooling ; a man who will put the English *Force* and Latin *Fors* down to the same root, will do anything in that line. Again, when he was in thunderous action he allowed volcanoes of vituperation to erupt, which one would have wished otherwise. He sadly lacked restraint, but, like the strong language of the old Prophets, his had its root in love of man.

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We know more of his intimacies and his foibles, which he loves humorously to exaggerate, than are generally given to the public. He has taken means to prevent any artificial pedestal, in idealized aloofness, ever being raised to him. His utter frankness led him to give the public his private accounts, which people generally keep to themselves ; and such correspondence as that painful one with Octavia Hill.¹ But when the faults of others were in question he was silent as the grave, to his own hurt. He was "kind even to the unthankful and the evil." As for many of us, how much more vulgar and base would the world have been without that noble and lovely soul. Many are those who owe him an irredeemable debt. His life was not, as he sadly thought, the story of baffled strife. Of him, as of Dr. Arnold, it could be said that not alone was he saved.²

¹ *Fors*, Letter LXXXVI.

² *Rugby Chapel*, by M. Arnold.

CHAPTER II

THE PILGRIM'S WAY

HAVING now stated our conviction that Ruskin was always essentially religious, we will trace the history of his beliefs.

He began life in 1819, under the strong influence of his mother, as a Calvinistic Protestant, of the narrow type then current. The Ruskins were properly Scottish Presbyterians, living in London. A Low Church or Spurgeon's Tabernacle was equally acceptable. His mother made him read with her daily portions of the Bible, two or three chapters, undiluted and unselected. They accomplished the journey from Genesis to Revelation in about a year, and then began at Genesis again next day, "hard names, numbers, Levitical Law and all." They went through it at least six times together.

She also taught him, "complete and sure," twenty-six chapters of the Bible, including the 119th Psalm, and all the Scottish Paraphrases of the Psalms.¹

¹ The passages were: Exod. xv, xx; 2 Sam. i. 17; 1 Kings viii; Ps. xxiii, xxxii, xc, xci, ciii, cxii, cxix, cxxxix;

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This did not make him vitally religious ; he was not “converted.” The Bible was, for the present, a rather tiresome task, and to chapel he and his father went submissively, feeling their sad inferiority to the mother in these matters. His mother’s creed he dutifully imbibed, without question or strong feeling of any kind. He had the proper antipathy to Rome, and the habit of outward prayer.¹ His real religion was born at Friar’s Crag, Derwentwater, at four years old, when he looked with awe into the dark lake over the mossy tree roots, and felt himself in the Presence.

He was, as an only child, a protected treasure, the pride of and a great responsibility to his wealthy parents. He never went to a Public School, and when he went to Oxford to be made into a Bishop his parents came with him, lived in the High, and his mother saw him every day. With them, far into mid-life, he went on all his foreign journeys but two, those of 1845 and 1858. The parental ideas remained potent with him to an extent hardly realizable by this

Prov. ii, iii, viii, xii ; Is. lviii ; Matt. v, vi, vii ; Acts xxvi ; 1 Cor. xiii, xv ; James iv ; Rev. v, vi. See *Præterita* for all this.

¹ For his actual experience of prayer, see the incident of 1845 in *Præterita*, vol. ii. pp. 260, 261.

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generation, which often finds it so difficult to bring their parents up properly.

His earlier works are written with the questionless devoutness of the untried mind. They were narrow in theology, fiercely Protestant, earnest enough ; and on their positive side, still sound and valuable. The first two volumes of *Modern Painters*, the whole of the *Stones of Venice* and the *Seven Lamps of Architecture*, and the *Edinburgh Lectures on Architecture and Painting* belong to this period. So, broadly, do the *Manchester Lectures on the Political Economy of Art* in 1857 ; but they are the herald of the next epoch.

He resisted the new Geology of Lyell, declared indignantly that God had created the Alpine valleys, and put the rivers to flow along them, denying that the rivers had worn their own valleys out. Somewhere in the later fifties we find him scandalized by the statement of Frederick Denison Maurice that Jael's treacherous murder of Sisera was a wicked deed. The fact that Deborah the Prophetess sang a sacred song over it was enough to justify it to Ruskin, then over thirty-five.¹

Just before this incident, however, his moral

¹ *Præterita*, iii. 28.

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sense was beginning to revolt from certain parts of his creed. He was, he says, invited to a "fashionable séance of Evangelical doctrine, at the Earl of Ducie's, presided over by Mr. Molyneux, then a divine of celebrity in that sect, who sat with one leg over his other knee, in the attitude always given to Herod at the Massacre of the Innocents in mediæval sculpture, and discoursed in tones of consummate assurance and satisfaction, and to the entire comfort and consent of his Belgravian audience, on the beautiful parable of the Prodigal Son. Which, or how many, of his hearers he meant to describe as having personally lived on husks, and devoured their father's property, did not of course appear ; but that something of the sort was necessary to the completeness of the joy in heaven over them, now in Belgrave Square, at the feet, or one foot, of Mr. Molyneux, could not be questioned. Waiting my time, till the raptures of the converted company had begun to flag a little, I ventured, from a back seat, to enquire of Mr. Molyneux what we were to learn from the example of the other son, not prodigal, who was, his father said, 'ever with me and all that I have, thine.' A sudden horror and unanimous feeling of the serpent having somehow got over

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the wall into their Garden of Eden, fell on the whole company ; and some of them, I thought, looked at the candles, as if they expected them to burn blue. After a pause of a minute, gathering himself into an expression of pity and indulgence, withholding latent thunder, Mr. Molyneux explained to me that the home-staying son was merely a picturesque figure introduced to fill the background of the parable agreeably, and contained no instruction or example for the well-disposed scriptural student, but on the contrary, rather, a snare for the unwary, and a temptation to self-righteousness—which was, of all sins, the most offensive to God. Under the fulmination of which answer, I retired from the séance in silence, nor ever attended another of the kind from that day to this.”¹

It was just this lack of feeling for righteousness as such, the idea that you needed first to be a “most sinful sinner” if you wished to become a “most Christian Christian,” and a want of recognition that forgiveness was a spiritual and inward process, which caused the contemptuous references to his early form of doctrine

¹ *Præterita*, III. i. 32–34. Also referred to in *Munera Pulveris*, App. V.

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which are scattered thickly throughout Ruskin's later writings.

The experiences which make epochs in men's lives are indeed strangely various and unexpected. Three events stand out as the destroyers of his Protestantism and of much of his outward edifice of faith. Their year was 1858. One was the discovery that the Puritan Sabbath of his youth had no Scriptural authority, but based itself, without confessing it, on the Jewish Sabbath Day, by erroneous interpretation. "If they have deceived me in this, they have deceived me in everything," he said. His faith in his mother's religious guides was gone.¹ In 1858 for the first time he broke the Sabbath by drawing some flowers on Sunday. That act, in him, stood for emancipation.² He had been finding that Catholic Psalters were lovely things, that Catholic peasants in Tuscany led sweet and patient lives, and that "Presbyterian prayers against time by people who never expected to be any the better for them, were unlovely and wrong."³ The same year he turned in at Turin to hear a Waldensian pastor. This was the

¹ *Præterita*, vol. iii. p. 39.

² *Id.* p. 41.

³ *Id.* p. 48.

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second event. "To an audience of about seventeen gray-haired women and a few men, the preacher, a somewhat stunted figure with a cracked voice, put his utmost zeal into a consolatory discourse on the wickedness of the wide world, more especially of the plain of Piedmont and the city of Turin, and on the exclusive favour with God enjoyed by the between nineteen and twenty-four elect members of his congregation, in the streets of Admah and Zeboim." "Myself neither cheered nor greatly alarmed by this doctrine, I walked back into the condemned city, and up into the gallery where Paul Veronese's 'Solomon and the Queen of Sheba' glowed in full afternoon light." And in that hour's meditation his "evangelical beliefs were put away, to be debated of no more."¹

But the solvent influences did not stop there. They seldom fail to proceed. Rebuilding rather than repair is generally necessary to a broken down system of thought. But that which left him in great darkness was an experience which could have so affected no one but Ruskin. This was the third event. It was the discovery at Venice that the best work was done by irreligious painters. He found that "Tintoret only occa-

¹ *Præterita*, vol. iii. pp. 44-6. *Fors*, Letter LXXVI.

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sionally forgot himself into religion," and that Titian had no religion at all, and yet had to be given as the standard of perfection in painting. Ruskin concluded, first, and quite truly, that "human work must be done honourably and thoroughly, because we are now men ; whether we expect to be angels, or ever were slugs, being practically no matter. That by the work we have done and not by our belief we shall be judged."¹ He went on, by generalizing, to a further conclusion in that year, afterwards to be corrected. The conclusion and the correction divide the periods of Ruskin's life. He concluded that the group of great worldly painters of various nations, Turner, Titian, Velasquez, Sir Joshua, Gainsborough, Tintoret, and Paul Veronese, did more perfect and stronger work than the sacred army of obedient Catholics headed by Cimabue, Giotto and Angelico, who worked under the guidance of a heavenly vision.

This seems a strange reason for losing faith. It can only be understood when we remember that Ruskin regarded art as the expression of the painter's whole nature, especially the soul of him ; and if the endowment from heaven were really potent, it should inspire the artist to do

¹ *Fors*, Letter LXXVI.

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work that is clearly supreme. That it did not do so was Ruskin's stumbling-block. I will not anticipate the ultimate solution ; but only pause to mourn over the many stumbling-blocks which our theories put in our way. Because the lot decided unfairly, Silas Marner, the wronged of heaven, lost his faith. How many have been and are unable to see through pain and poverty to God. How many have bound their faith to the accuracy of a record or the fidelity of a frail fellow-creature.

Of the religious utterances of this first period, which ended in 1858, the second volume of *Modern Painters* is the most typical. To me, it was the door by which in 1882 I entered into my love of Ruskin the author, as *Fors* led me to love and reverence the man. The subject is an analysis of Beauty as a various expression of the mind of God. It is published separately ; it is not a long book ; and it might be read for a second time along with the Author's notes of 1883. These give us the verdict of age upon the enthusiasm of its own youth, and are vastly entertaining. Even as Tennyson, in his "Locksley Hall Sixty Years After," puts his quietus upon the ebullitions of the most rhythmic and moving utterance of his youth, so does

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Ruskin, with mocking self-blame, speak with fatherly candour to the Oxford Graduate of 1845.

To this period, too, belongs his avowedly theological pamphlet, *Notes on the Construction of Sheepfolds*. It is of 1851, attacks ecclesiastical pretensions on Scriptural grounds, and in spite of its sectarian limitations was considered so sound in its main drift that the author reissued it in his mature period.

He states that all his works up to 1853 are marred by his narrow Protestant dogmatism. Now 1858, as we have seen, was his year of freedom from it, and from much that was more precious. Between 1853 and 1858 came out volumes iii and iv of *Modern Painters*, the *Lectures on Architecture and Painting* at Edinburgh, and the lectures at Manchester on the *Political Economy of Art*. The last marks transition. It is the forerunner of the next period ; it shows us how his way of treating Art led him on to Economics. But it is of great interest to study his position in these two volumes of *Modern Painters*. They are as religious as ever, and as devout ; but between Catholic and Protestant, frequently brought into contrast, they hold the scales of judgment. The author casts the lantern

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of criticism impartially upon both, but his own faith in the great verities still holds. It is plain, however, that conduct was rising to the chief place in his mind. The Sermon on the Mount was becoming, what it ever afterwards remained to him, the central teaching of the Christian faith.

If we omit the Poems of his boyhood and youth, and his early minor scientific contributions to journals, and begin his career as a writer for the public with the year 1842, when he wrote the first volume of *Modern Painters*, published next year, we have sixteen years of authorship for the Early Period. We have also, oddly enough, sixteen years of authorship, 1858 to 1874, for his Middle Period, shortly to be described ; and if we give sixteen years for the mature period also, that brings us to 1890, only a few months after the last number of *Præterita* struggled into the light from his failing pen. He wrote no more. We thus have three periods, Early, Middle, and Mature, each of sixteen years, not difficult to remember, 1842-1858, 1858-1874, and 1874-1890. It is a testimony to his utter frankness and undimmed candour that we are able thus to map out the growth of his convictions.

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For a growth it was, all the time, though apparently 1858 was a year of wreck and ruin. We cannot put new wine into old wineskins. His middle period was the time for the analytical tendency of his mind to have its way. Mazzini had already said that Ruskin had the most analytic mind in Europe ; and now that searching analysis which had discovered Luini and placed Tintoretto, and had penetrated, by a way of its own, far into the hidden secret of Beauty, could not be denied when it faced the stronghold of the Christian revelation, even though his own heart and every fibre of his sensitive nature was within the fortress attacked.

His economic crusade began in 1860 ; and on his spiritually desolated heart was piled the sorrow of the social system. Hermit and heretic he became, in religion and economics alike. Victorious in his championship of Turner and the Pre-raphaelites, whom single-handed he had placed on the pinnacle they have never lost, he had the literary and artistic world at his feet. This great position he cast aside to enter on a sterner battle. The recognized leader of taste, the arbiter of reputations, turned aside to abuse so good a man as John Stuart Mill, to say the

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most shocking things about the clergy and the clergy's wives, to testify against rent and interest, to blaspheme that steam power by which England was conquering the world, and to utter strange hesitating sayings which showed that he was not sure of a life to come. Nor could he brave the storm with the self-confident dogmatism of youth. "I seldom now feel sure of anything," he wrote in the first Christmas issue of *Fors*, "still seldomer, however, do I feel sure of the contrary of anything."¹ When we add that this period was marked by the loss of his parents, who had been everything to him, and by a grievous disappointment in love—for the girl who loved him would not marry him because he was not orthodox, so far as reasons can ever be given for such decisions, but died of a decline instead—we shall see how heavy was the lonely task set before him to do. Nor had the veneration of disciples and the growing recognition of all good men come to him yet; it came afterwards, built the prophet's shrine, in his lifetime certainly,² but only after the world's neglect, and his failure even to carry his own friends

¹ Letter XII, p. 3.

² Notably in the address and Turner drawing presented by distinguished men on his 80th birthday.

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with him, had helped to break the powers of his mind and set his brain reeling in recurring attacks of delirious inflammation. He was, in that madness, being offered upon the sacrifice and service of our faith.

During this middle period of prime mental power, he wrote nineteen volumes, and numerous catalogues and pamphlets. They are, in order of time : *The Two Paths*, *Modern Painters*, vol. v., *Unto This Last*, *Munera Pulveris*, *Sesame and Lilies*, *The Ethics of the Dust*, *The Crown of Wild Olive*, *Time and Tide*, *The Queen of the Air*, *Lectures on Art at Oxford*, the first half of *Flors Clavigera*, *Aratra Pentelici*, *The Eagle's Nest*, *Love's Meinie*, *Ariadne Florentina*, *Val D'Arno*, and most of the papers reprinted in *On the Old Road*. As an author he was in his full strength.

The significance of the period is that under the most painful uncertainties of doctrine, true religion shone still, blazed beaconlike, in fact : blazed as a beacon blazes when blown by tempest. But few readers ever thought of the writer as a heretic. He preached all the time the simple eternal sanction for right conduct which the nature of man, akin to the Divine, provides. He recognized the ineradicable claim which

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the teaching of the New Testament has upon our obedience. He attacked the Churches, not for being too Christian, but for not being anything like Christian enough. Referring to his mother's gift of twenty-six chapters learnt by heart, he says in 1874 :—

“The chapters became, indeed, strictly conclusive and protective to me in all modes of thought ; and the body of divinity they contain, acceptable through all fear or doubt ; nor, through any fear or doubt or fault have I ever lost my loyalty to them, nor betrayed the first command in the one I was made to repeat oftenest : ‘Let not Mercy and Truth forsake thee.’ And at my present age of fifty-five, in spite of some enlarged observations of what modern philosophers call the Reign of Law, I perceive more distinctly than ever the Reign of a Spirit of Mercy and Truth—infinite in pardon and purification for its wandering and faultful children, who have yet Love in their hearts ; and altogether adverse and implacable to its perverse and lying enemies, who have resolute hatred in their hearts, and resolute falsehood on their lips.”¹

The classical passage, as I should esteem it,

¹ *Fors*, Letter XLII.

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for this period is in *The Eagle's Nest*,¹ the Oxford Lectures of 1872 ; which contain some of his most careful religious writing :

“ All of you who have ever read your Gospels carefully must have wondered sometimes, what could be the meaning of those words, ‘ If any speak against the Son of Man it shall be forgiven ; but if against the Holy Spirit it shall not be forgiven, neither in this world nor in the next.’ The passage may have many meanings which I do not know ; but one meaning I know positively, and I tell you so just as frankly as I would that I knew the meaning of a verse in Homer. Those of you who still go to Chapel say every day your creed ; and, I suppose, too often, less and less every day believing it. Now, you may cease to believe two articles of it, and—admitting Christianity to be true—still be forgiven. But I can tell you, you must not cease to believe the third !

“ You begin by saying that you believe in an Almighty Father. Well, you may entirely lose the sense of that Fatherhood and yet be forgiven.

“ You go on to say that you believe in a Saviour Son. You may entirely lose the sense of that Sonship and yet be forgiven.

¹ Pp. 189-190.

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“ But the third article—disbelieve if you dare ! ‘ I believe in the Holy Ghost, the Lord and Giver of Life.’ Disbelieve that ! and your own being is degraded into the state of dust driven by the wind ; and the elements of dissolution have entered your very heart and soul.

“ All Nature, with one voice—with one glory—is set to teach you reverence for the life communicated to you from the Father of Spirits. The song of birds, and their plumage, the scent of flowers, their colour, their very existence, are in direct connection with the mystery of that communicated life : and all the strength, and all the arts of men, are measured by and founded upon their reverence for the passion, and their guardianship of the purity, of Love.”

Such is the utmost asceticism of the soul ; the most careful and determined assimilation of the least quantity of the bread of life. We may sum his creed in the words : Happy are the pure in heart, for they yet in their flesh shall see the light of Heaven and know the will of God.

Perhaps the question of Divine Personality may be felt even in our most audacious moments to be beyond our analysis. I do not count

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the word Personality a very helpful one, one way or the other. It is clearly on the human plane, must be imperfect, and may seriously limit our thought of God. Tennyson's favourite prayer was "O Thou Infinite, Amen." And with this much of personal address or aspiration our souls may surely rest. Take this as a satisfying account of the Creative Logos of the Greeks, written in the light of evolution, in 1869 (*Queen of the Air*, pp. 124-6):

"With respect to all these divisions and powers of plants—it does not matter in the least by what concurrences of circumstance or necessity they may gradually have been developed: the concurrence of circumstance is itself the supreme and inexplicable fact. We always come at last to a formative cause, which directs the circumstance, and mode of meeting it. If you ask an ordinary botanist the reason of the form of a leaf, he will tell you it is 'a developed tubercle,' and that 'its ultimate form is owing to the directions of its vascular threads.' But what directs its vascular threads? 'They are seeking for something they want' he will probably answer. What makes them want that? What made them seek for it thus? Seek for it, in five fibres or in three? Seek for it, in serration,

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or in sweeping curves? Seek for it, in servile tendrils, or impetuous spray? Seek for it, in woollen wrinkles rough with stings, or in glossy surfaces, green with pure strength, and winterless delight?

“There is no answer. But, the sum of all is, that over the entire surface of the earth and its waters, as influenced by the power of the air under solar light, there is developed a series of changing forms, in clouds, plants and animals, all of which have reference in their action or nature, to the human intelligence that perceives them; and on which, in their aspects of horror and beauty, and their qualities of good and evil, there is engraved a series of myths or words of the forming power, which, according to the true passion and energy of the human race, they have been enabled to read into religion. And this forming power has been by all nations partly confused with the breath of air through which it acts, and partly understood as a creative wisdom, proceeding from the Supreme Deity; but entering into and inspiring all intelligences that work in harmony with Him. And whatever intellectual results may be in modern days obtained by regarding this effluence only as a motion or vibration, every formative human art

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hitherto, and the best states of human happiness and order, have depended on the apprehension of its mystery (which is certain), and of its personality (which is probable)."

He concludes that lecture, the second in *The Queen of the Air*, with these words :

"This only we may discern assuredly ; this, every true light of science, every mercifully granted power, every wisely restricted thought, teach us more clearly day by day, that in the heaven above, and the earth beneath, there is one continual and omnipotent presence of help, and of peace, for all men who know that they Live, and remember that they Die."

To quote from the religious teaching of these fruitful years would be an endless task ; I must only refer, I fear, without quoting any of it, to *The Mystery of Life and its Arts*, printed in the complete edition of *Sesame and Lilies* ; a characteristic and pathetic exhortation, and chiefly perhaps, to §10-16 of the Introduction to *The Crown of Wild Olive*.

So much for his constructive teaching. But he was a destroyer too. The peculiarity of his position and the cause of his loneliness was that he was always throwing his darts not only into the camp of the business men and their allies

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the economists, but also into the two religious camps, generally opposed to one another, held, one by the clergy, the other by the materialistic men of science. He rebuked both parties for their assumptions, and he smote them with all the artillery of sarcasm, wit and indignation. "You have to guard against the fatalest darkness of the two opposite Prides : the Pride of Faith, which imagines that the nature of the Deity can be defined by its convictions ; and the Pride of Science, which imagines that the energy of Deity can be explained by its analysis." ¹ As sword-play it is fine. He gives what purports to be a scientific account of Shakespeare : so much water, so much carbo-hydrate and phosphorus, and thus you build up your organism called William Shakespeare—with, of course, something left out. He was ever dwelling on the realities of the spirit which chemistry omits. The fashionable scientific materialism of the seventies he utterly abhorred : he behaved to it as St. George to the Dragon. He loathed anatomy, mocked at the idea that you understood a creature by cutting up its remains ; and when the men of science at Oxford proceeded to vivisection he threw up his professorship in

¹ *Lectures on Art*, p. 50.

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flaming wrath, sick at heart ; every sentiment of mercy, every safe doctrine of science violated in unholy cruelty and impatience.

He describes the limitations of " some scientific minds, which in their judgment of the Universe can be compared to nothing so accurately as to the woodworms in the panel of a picture by some great painter, if we may conceive them as tasting with discrimination of the wood, and with repugnance of the colour, and declaring that even this unlooked for and undesirable combination is a normal result of the action of molecular Forces."¹

We pass on to the third period of sixteen years, the Mature Period as I call it, from 1874 to 1890, when his productive life ended. He now came to know more fully the fullness of faith. Here he entered into his reward, I say. The revelation of God to him became clearer, sweeter, mightier. As in 1858, the time of crisis was marked by two events which occurred that year, one in things spiritual and one in things artistic.²

The artistic event of 1874 was a reversal of the puzzling judgment of 1858 to the effect

¹ *Lectures on Art*, p. 52.

² See *Fors*, LXXVI, March 1877, vol. iv. p. 69.

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that the worldly painters excelled the devout ones. It came about through his copying one of Giotto's frescoes on the roof of the Lower Church at Assisi. He was allowed to erect a platform in that dark church over the High Altar, that he might see the picture. There he discovered that Giotto was only beaten by Tintoret in mere science, technique, laws of perspective, composition and light and shade, and that religion had solemnized and developed every faculty of Giotto's heart and hand. The Franciscan monastery at Assisi is one of the most sacred places on earth anyhow, but 1874 saw one more gift of light there vouchsafed, and a haunting problem solved. Art was to Ruskin a visible manifestation of life's full faculties, in a department he specially understood ; and religion, which is the source of strength and the support of character, he thought should be judged by its output.

Now we turn to the second event. His hopes of the reality of a Spirit world received unexpected and potent confirmation from the fact that in December, 1875, he had, at the house of Lord Mount Temple, at Broadlands, Romsey, some psychic experience so definite that he was convinced that he had true com-

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munication with her whom he had lately lost, the "Rosie" of *Præterita*, No. XXVII.¹ It was a confirmation to his faith. He became an Honorary Member of the Society for Psychical Research the year after its formation in 1882, joining in that well-grounded hope that a true science of human Personality might be built up by its patient experimental methods. To Lady Mount Temple, *née* Tollemache, the Egeria of the winter of 1840 in Rome, we owe much for the help she was to Ruskin all through life; and much also that from her came the stimulus to Frederick W. H. Myers and Edmund Gurney to begin the Society for Psychical Research. Two of Ruskin's stories of Death wraiths may be found in *Fors*.² also a dream in Letter LXV. He never took to ordinary spiritualism; it is indeed from an attack upon it that he turns to a note describing the happiness of his own experience. "I leave this passage as it was written; though as it passes through the press, it is ordered by Atropos that I should hear a piece of evidence on this matter no less clear as to the present ministry of such powers as that which led Peter

¹ See Epilogue.

² Letter LXIII, vol. vi. p. 89.

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out of prison, than all the former, or nearly all the former, evidence examined by me was of the presence of the legion which ruled among the tombs of Gennesaret.”¹ He allows the contradiction to stand ; indeed, in this puzzling and partially known subject, a consistent position is beyond the knowledge of most. He returns to the attack on Spiritualism, however, in his 1883 note to the second volume of *Modern Painters*, p. 244.

In the following year, 1876, at Venice at Christmas, he had vouchsafed to himself the inward assurance of an immortal life ; he entered into a singular happiness ; *Fors* became the organ of a mysticism truly Johannine ; he loved to expound universal Christian truth, so catholic indeed in the true sense that Cardinal Manning aspired to turn him to Rome. That was a vain hope. He still retained his analytical faculty. He says that he would “give up Moses” if criticism demanded it.² Concerning his lectures of 1877 at Oxford he writes to Miss Beever in the “hortus inclusus” at Coniston that he has been able for the first time to speak boldly to the students of immortal life. The

¹ *Fors*, Letter LXI, p. 7, note.

² See also *Fors*, Letter LXVI, vol. vi. p. 172.

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concluding passage of the last lecture is this :¹

“ But obey the word in its simplicity, in wholeness of purpose and with severity of sacrifice, like this of the Venetian Maids’, and truly you shall receive sevenfold into your bosom in this present life, as in the world to come, life everlasting.” “ He shall give his angels charge over you, to keep you in all your ways ; and the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.” It came to be true of himself that “ if life be led under heaven’s law, the sense of heaven’s nearness only deepens with advancing years, and is assured in death.”²

“ The faith of the saints and prophets rising into serenity of knowledge, ‘ I know that my Redeemer liveth ’ is a state of mind of which ordinary men cannot reason ; but which, in the practical power of it, has always governed the world, and must for ever. No dynamite will ever be invented that can rule—it can but dissolve and destroy. Only the Word of God and the heart of man can govern.”³

We cannot conclude this analysis better than

¹ *On the Old Road*, vol. ii. p. 388.

² *Fors*, XCII, 1883. ³ *Id.* XCII, vol. viii. p. 205.

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by quoting from the last number of *Fors* in 1884 :

“Looking back upon my efforts for the last twenty years, I believe that their failure has been in great part owing to my compromise with the infidelity of this outer world, and my endeavours to base my pleading upon motives of ordinary prudence and kindness, instead of on the primary duty of loving God ; foundation other than which no man can lay. I thought myself speaking to a crowd which could only be influenced by visible utility ; nor was I the least aware how many entirely good and holy persons were living in the faith and love of God as vividly and practically now as ever in the early enthusiasm of Christendom. These have shown me, with lovely initiation, in how many secret places the prayer was made which I had foolishly listened for at the corners of the streets, and on how many hills which I had thought left desolate, the hosts of heaven still moved in chariots of fire.”¹ These passages show that F. W. H. Myers, in the beautiful obituary which I am permitted to print as an

¹ This reference is known to refer chiefly to Francesca Alexander and her mother at Florence. Not improbably, also, to the Misses Beever at Coniston.

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Epilogue, was not correct in describing the experience with the medium at Broadlands, as Ruskin's one brief season of blissful trust in the Unseen. It is true of his temporary belief in spiritualism.

I trust it will have become clear that Ruskin's spiritual history is not a story of arbitrary and fanciful changes without connected significance. It is the orderly development of a research, by a man singularly qualified to hold a religious Research Fellowship.

He may be said to have matriculated in religion at his mother's knee. There he learnt his Bible. He took a degree with the second volume of *Modern Painters* and the works allied to it in spirit. He then became a Master of Arts, qualified to teach, a recognized religious authority among many authorities. Had he never gone to Venice and seen Tintoret he might have built, so he says, a Catholic archiepiscopal palace at York instead of a museum at Sheffield ; or he might have been such a man as Dean Church or John Henry Newman, on Calvinistic Protestant lines. But Ruskin proceeded to a higher status. He must needs penetrate deeper ; and in the crisis of 1858 he took his Fellowship by a thesis on the Irreducible Minimum of the

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Religious Outfit. Thenceforth he carried on a research, he was a "seeker after God," often wrote "in much darkness and sorrow of heart"; and in sixteen years the conclusions were ready, the convictions matured, the saint perfected.

CHAPTER III

TO WHAT FOLD?

TO what school of thought or to which among our denominations, if to any, can Ruskin be said to belong? He did not actively, in mature life, belong to any, or attend Church or Chapel. Let us examine his doctrines in this connection.

The first point which strikes the inquirer is Ruskin's strong hostility to professionalism in religion, to payment for preaching. Against a separate order of clergy, maintained for that object, and claiming a certain position by reason of their ministration, he was the most poignant voice of his time, from inside Christianity. Letters XXXVIII, XLIX, and LXII of *Fors Clavigera* are full of the most unrestrained expression of this testimony. We will quote :

“The particular kinds of folly also which lead youths to become clergymen, uncalled, are specially intractable. That a lad just out of his teens, and not under the influence of any deep religious enthusiasm, should ever contemplate

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the possibility of his being set up in the middle of a mixed company of men and women of the world, to instruct the aged, encourage the valiant, support the weak, reprove the guilty, and set an example to all ; and not feel what a ridiculous and blasphemous business it would be, if he only pretended to do it for hire ; and what a ghastly and murderous business it would be if he did it strenuously wrong ; and what a marvellous and all but incredible thing the Church and its power must be, if it were possible for him, with all the good meaning in the world, to do it rightly—that any youth, I say, should ever have got himself into the state of recklessness or conceit, required to become a clergyman at all, under existing circumstances, must put him quite out of the pale of those whom one appeals to on any reasonable or moral question, in serious writing. . . . There is certainly no Bishop now in the Church of England who would either dare in a full drawing-room to attribute to himself the gift of prophecy, in so many words ; or to write at the head of any of his sermons, ‘ On such and such a day, of such and such a month, in such and such a place, the Word of the Lord came unto me, saying ’ :—Nevertheless he claims to have received the

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Holy Ghost himself by laying on of hands ; and to be able to communicate the Holy Ghost to other men in the same manner. And he knows that the office of the prophet is as simply recognized in the enumeration of the powers of the ancient church, as that of the apostle or evangelist or doctor. And yet he can neither point out in the Church the true prophets, to whose number he dares not say that he himself belongs, nor the false prophets, who are casting out devils in the name of Christ without being known by him. . . . But the word ' Priest ' is one which he finds it convenient to assume himself, and to give to his fellow clergymen. He knows, just as well as he knows prophecy to be a gift attributed to the Christian minister, that priesthood is a function expressly taken away from the Christian minister (as distinguished, that is to say, from other members of the Church). He dares not say in the open drawing-room that he offers sacrifice for any soul there ; and he knows that he cannot give authority for calling himself a priest from any canonical book of the New Testament. So he equivocates on the sound of the word ' Presbyter.' . . ."¹

" This preaching of Christ has, nevertheless,

¹ Letter XLIX.

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become an acknowledged profession and means of livelihood for gentlemen : and the simony of to-day differs only from that of apostolic times, in that, while the elder Simon thought the gift of the Holy Ghost worth a considerable offer in ready money, the modern Simon would on the whole refuse to accept the same gift of the Third Person of the Trinity, without a nice little attached income, a pretty church, with a steeple restored by Mr. Scott, and an eligible neighbourhood.”¹

And, in soberer vein : “ No way will ever be found of rightly ordaining men who have taken up the trade of preaching as a means of livelihood, and to whom it is a matter of personal interest whether they preach in one place or another ; only those who have left their means of living, that they may preach, and whose peace follows them as they wander, and abides where they enter in, are of God’s ordaining ; and practically until the Church insists that every one of her ministers shall either have an independent income, or support himself for his ministry on Sunday by true bodily toil during the week, no word of the living Gospel will ever be spoken from her pulpits. How many of those who now

¹ Letter LV.

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occupy them have verily been invited to such office by the Holy Ghost may be easily judged by observing how many the Holy Ghost has similarly invited of religious persons already in prosperous business or desirable position.”¹

Another passage from another place runs : “Take the desire of teaching—the entirely unselfish and noble instinct for telling to those who are ignorant the truth we know, and guarding them from the errors we see them in danger of—there is no nobler, no more constant instinct in honourable breasts ; but let the Devil formalise it, and mix the pride of a profession with it—get foolish people entrusted with the business of instruction, and make their giddy heads giddier by putting them up in pulpits above a submissive crowd—and you have it instantly corrupted into its own reverse ; you have an alliance against the light (saying) ‘Light is in us only. Shut your eyes close and fast and we will lead you.’ ”²

In another place he says the difficult question is not, why workmen don’t go to church, but—why other people do. He asks,³ “What Scrip-

¹ *Fors*, Letter LXXV, § 21. Notes and Correspondence.

² *Time and Tide*, p. 71.

³ *Sheepfolds*, p. 269.

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ture warrant there is for the offices and authority of the clergy, and defies anyone to find any. Their functions, he says, must depend on the needs of the time. "Robinson Crusoe, on his island, wants no Bishop, and makes a thunderstorm do for an evangelist. The University of Oxford would do ill without its Bishop, but wants an evangelist besides, and that forthwith."

He says that by yielding to the impression that the most sacred calling is that of the clergy, "the sacred character of the layman himself is forgotten, and his own ministerial duty is neglected," and so laymen wrongly "devote their whole time and energy to the business of this world. No mistake can possibly be greater. Every member of the Church is equally bound to the service of the Head of the Church, and that service is pre-eminently the saving of souls. There is not a moment of a man's active life in which he may not be indirectly preaching, and throughout a great part of his life he ought to be directly preaching, and teaching both strangers and friends." This is from the *Sheepfolds* pamphlet of 1851; at that time he nevertheless contemplates church officers of a sort, as organizers, deacons, or visitors, and thinks they may be maintained

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for their special work, and includes religious instruction and exhortation among these duties. But this last advice he supersedes in *Fors* of 1873 and later dates, when he places preaching on a purely amateur basis, in the passages quoted already, and similar ones.

“All good judging, and all good preaching, must be given gratis. Look back to what I have incidentally said of lawyers and clergy, as professional—that is to say, as living by their judgment, and sermons. You will perhaps now be able to receive my conclusive statement, that all such professional sale of justice and mercy is a deadly sin. A man may sell the work of his hands, but not his equity, nor his piety. Let him live by his spade, and if his neighbours find him wise enough to decide a dispute between them, or if he is in modesty and simplicity able to give them a piece of pious advice, let him do so, in Heaven’s name, but not take a fee for it.”¹

In Letter XIII of *Time and Tide* and in *Sesame and Lilies* § 22 he explains the sort of functions he would give to his Bishops, as described in Chapter V.

¹ *Fors*, Letter XXXI, § 18, and also Letter LXVII, § 10.

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We have incidentally alluded to Ruskin's teaching on the Priesthood of all Believers. He asserts that all members of the Universal Church are Priests,¹ that the exclusive priestly claim of the Clergy is "blasphemous," and has no shadow of excuse, "because it has been ordained by the Holy Spirit that no Christian minister shall once call himself a Priest as distinguished from his flock from one end of the New Testament to the other."

Schools of religious thought are discriminated by nothing so decisively as by their attitude to the Bible. They are classed at once if they call the Bible the Word of God. This bad and quite unauthorized habit has blinded many eyes. Ruskin attacks it again and again. "The error consists, first, in declaring a bad translation of a group of books of various qualities, accidentally associated, to be the Word of God. Secondly, reading of this singular Word of God, only the bits they like, and never taking any pains to understand even those. Thirdly, resolutely refusing to practise even the small bits they do understand, if such practice happen to go against their own worldly—especially money—interests."²

¹ *Sheepfolds*, p. 271.

² *Fors*, Letter XXXV, § 3.

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Compare this severe passage with one from *The Ethics of the Dust*, V § 59 : " The way in which common people read their Bibles is just like the way that the old monks thought hedgehogs ate grapes. They rolled themselves (it was said), over and over, where the grapes lay on the ground : what fruit stuck to their spines, they carried off and ate. So your hedgehoggy readers roll themselves over and over their Bibles, and declare that whatever sticks to their own spines is Scripture, and that nothing else is." ¹

But Ruskin is not satisfied with negative teaching on this great subject. He tells us what the Word of God is, as well as what it is not :

" By that Word, or Voice, or Breath, or Spirit, the heavens and earth, and all the host of them, were made, and in it they exist. It is your life ; and speaks to you always, so long as you live nobly ; dies out of you as you refuse to obey it ; leaves you to hear, and be slain by, the word of an evil spirit, instead. It may come to you in books—come to you in clouds—come to you in the voices of men—come to you in the

¹ See also *Fors*, Letter LXV and Letter XLIV, also Letter XL for an amusing account of the edifying Bible story of Joab and Abner ; and very numerous other passages.

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stillness of deserts. You must be strong in evil, if you have quenched it wholly ;—very desolate in this Christian land, if you have never heard it at all.”¹

Much may be gleaned from a man’s use of the word Church. Is it a building, or a select and limited outward community or more than either ? Ruskin, interpreting Scripture in his *Sheepfolds*,² finds a Low Church divine giving the meaning of the word Church to be an “external institution of certain forms of worship.” He therefore suggests the following emendations : “Unto the angel of the external institution of certain forms of worship at Ephesus write,” and “Salute the brethren which are at Laodicea, and Nymphas, and the external institution of certain forms of worship which is in his house.”

“I continually see subscriptions of ten, fifteen, or twenty thousand pounds for new churches. Now a good clergyman never wants a church. He can say all that his congregation essentially need to hear in any of his parishioners’ best parlours, or upper chambers, or in the ball-room at the Nag’s Head ; or if these are not large

¹ *Fors*, Letter XXXVI, § 3.

² *On the Old Road*, vol. ii. p. 253.

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enough, in the market-place, or the harvest field. And until every soul in the parish is cared for, and saved from such sorrow of body or mind as alms can give comfort in, no clergyman, but in sin or heresy, can ask for a church at all. What does he want with altars? Was the Lord's Supper eaten on one? What with pews?—unless rents for the pride of them? What with font and pulpit?—that the next wayside brook, or mossy bank, cannot give him? The temple of Christ is in His people—His order, to feed them—His throne, alike of audience and of judgment, in Heaven : were it otherwise, even the churches which we have already are not always open for prayer.”¹

He suggests that we can decide “who are Christ's sheep, not by their being in any definite fold, for many are lost sheep sometimes ; but by their sheeplike behaviour ; and a great many are indeed sheep which, on the far mountain side, in their peacefulness, we take for stones.”² This is a delightful expression of the feeling that you may be a child of God, without having heard of the Christian Revelation of Him.

¹ *General Statement as to the Nature and Purpose of the St. George's Guild*, p. 12, 1882.

² *Sheepfolds* : in *On the Old Road*, vol. ii. p. 259.

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To make Baptism a sign of admission into the visible Church he says is absurd ; “ for we know that half the baptized people in the world are very visible rogues. Also the Holy Ghost is sometimes given before Baptism, and it would be absurdity to call a man on whom the Holy Ghost had fallen, an invisible Christian.” ¹

On the Sacrament he declared to a correspondent in 1888 that he would take it from anybody’s hand, the Pope’s, the Queen’s or a hedgeside gipsy’s, and quoted Longfellow’s lines:

“ A holy family, that makes
Each meal a supper of the Lord.”

He is drastic in his rejection of all Prayer Books. Prayers out of a book are no prayers to him ; he cannot think that varying needs are met by routine prayer. These statements are in his *Letters to the Clergy on the Lord’s Prayer and the Church* (1879), reprinted in *On the Old Road*, p. 325, and he comments on the distrust in the efficacy of prayer likely to be produced by having to ask one day “ that the rest of our lives hereafter may be pure and holy,” knowing that next day, or at least next Sunday, we shall be expected to confess that “ there is

¹ *Sheepfolds*, p. 259.

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no health in us." He seriously suspects the effect of the Liturgy on the truthfulness of the English mind.

When he discusses the vital problem of the seat of Authority in religion he declares that it ultimately resides within, not in an outward Church or Book. He is absolutely uncompromising about this.

"There is, therefore, in matters of doctrine, no such thing as the authority of the Church. We might as well talk of the authority of a morning cloud. There may be light in it, but the light is not of it ; and it diminishes the light that it gets ; and lets less of it through than it receives, Christ being its sun. Or, we might as well talk of the authority of a flock of sheep—for the Church is a body to be taught and fed, not to teach and feed ; and of all sheep that are fed on the earth, Christ's sheep are the most simple," likely to die in the bramble thickets ; "but for their Shepherd, who is for ever finding them and bearing them back, with torn fleeces and eyes full of fear."¹

There is also an interesting passage in *The Eagle's Nest* (p. 135) on "The Light that lighteth every man that cometh into the world."

¹ *Sheepfolds*, p. 267.

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By way of Church discipline he advises a process of excommunication by a jury of laymen.¹

What of religious decorative art? Surely here the great art critic and apostle of the Beautiful will be found on the ritualist side? Not so. He says that Church art, pictures, images, and so on, "make us believe what we would not otherwise have believed ; and, secondly, make us think of subjects we should not otherwise have thought of, intruding them amidst our ordinary thoughts in a confusing and familiar manner." "This art," he says, "is misapplied, and in most cases, very dangerously so. Our duty is to believe in the existence of Divine, or any other, persons, only upon rational proofs of their existence ; and not because we have seen pictures of them."

"But I nevertheless believe that he who trusts much to such helps (as 'Rafaelesque and other sacred paintings of a high order') will find them fail him at his need ; and that the dependence, in any great degree, on the presence or power of a picture, indicates a wonderfully feeble sense of the presence and power of God. I do not think that any man, who is thoroughly certain that Christ is in the room, will care

¹ *Sheepfolds*, p. 283.

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what sort of picture of Christ he has on its walls and, in the plurality of cases, the delight taken in art of this kind is, in reality, nothing more than a form of graceful indulgence of those sensibilities which the habits of a disciplined life restrain in other directions. Such art is, in a word, the opera and drama of the monk. Sometimes it is worse than this, and the love of it is the mask under which a general thirst for morbid excitement will pass itself off for religion. The young lady who rises in the middle of the day, jaded by her last night's ball, and utterly incapable of any simple or wholesome religious exercise, can still gaze into the dark eyes of the Madonna di San Sisto, or dream over the whiteness of an ivory crucifix, and returns to the course of her daily life in full persuasion that her morning's feverishness has atoned for her evening's folly. And, all the while, the art which possesses these very doubtful advantages is acting for undoubtful detriment, in the various ways above examined (in a previous passage), on the inmost fastnesses of faith ; it is throwing subtle endearments round foolish traditions, confusing sweet fancies with sound doctrines, and enforcing false assertions with pleasant circumstantiality, until, to the usual, and assuredly

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sufficient, difficulties standing in the way of belief, its votaries have added a habit of sentimentally changing what they know to be true, and of dearly loving what they confess to be false."

"Has there then (the reader asks emphatically) been no true religious ideal? Has religious art never been of any service to mankind? I fear, on the whole, not.

"More, I think, has always been done for God by few words than many pictures, and more by few acts than many words."

"And for us all there is in this matter even a deeper danger than that of indulgence. There is the danger of Artistical Pharisaism. Of all the forms of pride and vanity, as there are none more subtle, so I believe there are none more sinful, than those which are manifested by the Pharisees of art. To be proud of birth, of place, of wit, of bodily beauty, is comparatively innocent, just because such pride is more natural, and more easily detected. But to be proud of our sanctities; to pour contempt upon our fellows because, forsooth, we like to look at Madonnas in bowers of roses, better than at plain pictures of plain things; and to make this religious art of ours the expression of our own perpetual self-complacency—congratulating ourselves, day

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by day, on our purities, proprieties, elevations, and inspirations, as above the reach of common mortals, this I believe to be one of the wickedest and foolishlest forms of human egotism.”¹

These clear-sounding testimonies form a coherent whole. Is there any religious body in England which holds all, or even most of these positions ? Remarkably enough, there is one which holds them all ; indeed, whose separate existence depends on holding just these positions, positive and negative alike. This one is the Society of Friends. We find to our surprise that, without knowing it, Ruskin was a real and very completely furnished Quaker.

The testimony against a paid or professional clergy, against all clerical claims, is the very heart of Quaker practice ; and the *raison d'être* of their separate meetings. The Priesthood of all Believers is at the heart of their official statements, and the implication in their ministry. They say that there should be no laity among them, exactly as Ruskin does. They decline all forms of fixed or routine prayer, and never practise them. Their meeting houses are plain, and their worship is ascetically devoid of sensuous

¹ *Modern Painters*, vol. iii. p. 57 (iv. 4) (1856).

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attraction in glowing glass or carven stone or in the odour of incense.

It is one of their central historical testimonies, dating from the seventeenth century, that the Bible should not be called the Word of God. For this they were called atheists by the clergy of Charles II. The controversies of that time rarely avoided touching on this sore point. For them, as for Ruskin, the seat of authority is The Light Within, and, like Ruskin, they are willing to "give up Moses" if history demands it.

The attitude of Ruskin to Baptism and the Lord's Supper is a thoroughly Quaker one. Both hold that they are unnecessary and have no "Validity." The only "Church" they recognize is the Universal Church composed of all faithful men everywhere; and as Ruskin speaks of sheep on distant mountains who look like stones, so Friends have always held that the heathen were or could be saints of the household of God, and that knowledge of the historical Jesus Christ was not essential to salvation here or hereafter.

There is a remarkable omission too. So far as I know Ruskin never speaks of Hell, as an article of faith. Nor does it ever occur in Quaker ministry.

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It is almost uncanny that there is an agreement also on minor testimonies which might appear accidental. Friends do not approve of mourning garments, though there is in this generation some weakness about this. Ruskin thinks that "the people who really believe in immortality must be few, else why the Church's singular habit of putting on mourning for every one summoned to be with Christ, which is far better."¹

It is well known that Friends refuse to take judicial Oaths, and gave a handle thereby to hostile magistrates, when other handles slipped away. Ruskin says plainly that Oaths are "disobedience to the teaching of Christ."²

I believe we have now mentioned all the points of Quakerism, except the testimony against all War. From Chapter VIII devoted to this, it is clear that Ruskin was generally, but not always, on Quaker lines. He wobbled somewhat, and felt puzzled, and I am afraid that a certain number of Friends have done the same at times of crisis.

Lastly, the Quaker simplicity of life, the avoidance of luxury and social pretensions,

¹ *Crown of Wild Olive*, Introduction, p. 17.

² *Fors*, Letter XX.

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the fixing of attention chiefly on the things of the spirit, are Ruskin's dearest delight, the subject of his most earnest pleas. Take one :

“ The uses, and the desire, of seclusion, of meditation, of restraint, and of correction, are they not passing from us in the collision of worldly interests, and restless contests of mean hope and meaner fear ? The Lord is my light and my salvation, whom shall I fear ? ”¹

For a man who, in the name and for the sake of spiritual things, fought the good fight of a reformer during two generations, Ruskin was but little brought into personal friendship with members of the Society of Friends. George Baker, of Bewdley, who was one of the early donors to the St. George's Guild and was long one of its Trustees, and afterwards its Master, is the principal personal link he had with the Society. Henry Swan, formerly his curator at the Sheffield Museum, was a Friend.

When the writer, as one of a party of Friends, was kindly shown over Brantwood by its owner in 1884, the only things he had to say to us about Quakerism in the course of a forty minutes' talk, were a little homily on sectarianism, contrasted with a church of “ God-fearing people,”

¹ *Eagle's Nest*, p. 139.

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including Catholics and Turks—a little chaff about our failing in the matter of usury to literally obey our Bibles, as he supposed we thought we always tried to do—and an astonishing pronouncement that “Your early Friends would have carried all before them, if they had not opposed that which is obeyed by the whole of the animal creation—the love of colour.” We must take this as one of the characteristic plunges into emphasis (some well-balanced people would use a stronger term perhaps), which are a cause at once of his strength as a stimulating teacher, and of his insufficiency as an infallible oracle, to be mechanically interpreted.

These three utterances, however, slight as they are, show a misreading of Quakerism. We are, I trust, the least sectional of little sects. The religion of the Light Within is at the basis of all other religions too ; it is the absolute religion, religion reduced to its simplest, and it brings us into sympathetic connection with Evangelical, Ritualist, Jew, Mohammedan and “heathen,” so far as these have the Divine Spirit shining through their particular forms of thought and practice. Also, of all people, we are the least prone to unintelligent Biblical literalism, and are quite unlikely to be stumbled

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by the Mosaic regulations about usury. There is a measure of truth in his third statement about "colour," if by that he meant, in a comprehensive sense, those recreations which relieve the strain of a severely ruled life. We have become less numerous, I doubt not, through our restrictions (now abandoned) on art, music, "the theatre and the ball-room." But there have been compensations to those who have stayed under the discipline.

Ruskin, then, never understood the Society of Friends in the outward. This was the mere result of circumstances. Brought up in the south of London, educated at Oxford, living much abroad, with local interests and acquaintances chiefly centering round Denmark Hill, Oxford and Coniston, he had no great opportunity to meet Friends.

He never had any Quaker teaching in his youth. The voice of the Society of Friends was too faint to reach him. He never found his way across the hill from Brantwood to the ancient meeting house at Hawkshead, but his word has penetrated further than ours, and all unaware he has done our work.

How marvellous is this series of harmonies, unintended, unrecognized on both sides, between

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him and the Society of Friends ! It looks as though Quakerism is not an arbitrary group of doctrines gathered up, as he fancied them, by George Fox, but a coherent system, all whose parts hang together as they all appear together when they rise up in Ruskin. It is a strong confirmation of the coherence and validity of the religious discoveries of our Quaker forefathers in the seventeenth century, when we find that they are repeated in the research of another emancipated but devout thinker, a religious rationalist who was an expert in the things of the soul.

CHAPTER IV

RUSKIN AND MILL

A RECONCILIATION

THE controversy between Ruskin and the orthodox Political Economists of his time was central in his career, and has occupied a prominent place in the thought of the last sixty years. Either Ruskin's teaching or that of Mill and his colleagues, or that of both, has been clouded with uncertainty and so has lost force. If it should be found, as I shall try to show, that there was no real ground for the controversy at all—that it was all due to misapprehension, to mere ambiguity in a term, it will reinforce the conclusions of the economists in their modern revised form, add cogency to the teaching of Ruskin, and clear away storm clouds which have done great harm. The mistake arose through a wrong conception by Ruskin of the scope of Economics—of what its teachers were after.

Political Economy has always been treated by careful writers as the science of human action

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with regard to the acquisition and use of property. This is a pure science. It is a branch of applied psychology. It measures motives, and analyses the action of buyers and sellers with a view to finding out what men in business will normally do, and how values of land, labour, capital and commodities are determined. This does not open any question of right or wrong, any question of oppression or starvation, of luxury, vanity or pride. This is as cold-blooded, as purely intellectual and critical an inquiry as the study and measurement of electrical currents ; what produces them, conducts them, wastes or scatters them. An electrician will show how a telephone may be made, he will invent it, and he will explain it ; but it is no business of his to ask whether courtesy and good feeling or profanity and fraud will characterize the messages which will go over his instrument. That is not his business as a scientist, though the use of his own telephone is his business as a man.

Now this is a perfectly intelligible, it may be a perfectly blameless, and, at first sight, a probably useful branch of inquiry. It separates off from the great mass of human actions a definite field ; it omits the motive of religion, the motive of love, and the motive of self-denying service,

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outside service for the family for whom the man under discussion is economically responsible.

Concerning it, we must ask three questions :

1. Is this separation practicable, and in consequence are the results true or approximately true ?

2. Under what limitations is it useful to make such a separation, and what real guidance to conduct, if any, follows ?

3. Afterwards we will inquire to what extent the political economists have rigidly confined themselves to theory, and having found that they did not, when they went over into practical advice we will ask whether they were deluded by the results they had reached within their limits, and whether they hastily assumed that they had found a more complete guide to human action than they had.

Is then the separation of dealings which can be expressed in terms of money from the other dealings of life sufficiently possible to make a science of those dealings ? Are they predictable, given the circumstances ? Will like causes produce like results ? Is the motive measured by money sufficiently separable from other motives, to be treated by itself ?

We must at once admit that such separation

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cannot be absolute ; that affection, pity, charity, habit, ignorance, legislative restriction, public spirit, prevent the individual from always acting according to his economic interests. He does not always buy in the cheapest shop ; he grumbles but helps a struggling neighbour by his custom, and puts up for some time with an inferior article. He goes on using old machinery for want of knowledge or of a progressive mind. He keeps on an old hand for the sake of the past. Still, in the long run, these qualifications to the general law do not survive. In general, men in the large may be trusted to do that which it is their economic interest to do, within such lines of honesty as are ratified by law, or of honour as are regarded by public opinion. Competition, that is, is the general rule in business ; and we shall not go far wrong in assuming it as the method in vogue in Europe and America, unless some special feature of monopoly or legislative Protection or trade combination supersedes it.

This is not the same as saying that it is always right to follow the lines of pure competition. We must at all points check the tendency to pass from the indicative to the imperative mood, from a science to an art ; from what will raise our profits to what is our duty in our business.

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So we assert that there is a Theory of Value, and that it is an approximately verified theory under the present system of business. Further, that in 1860, when business was less regulated than it is now, the results were so much nearer verification by experience.

That business is carried on for self-interest on the whole, seems to me a safe approximation to reality—and that the exceptions to it are not chemically explosive of its system as Ruskin says, but can be added to the enquiry afterwards, like friction or the resistance of the air in mechanics.

Whether this is desirable, or the last word of human organization, is quite another question; and the questions are better kept separate. Moral considerations are too important to come in as an incidental qualification to business motives. They should be the dominating influence, and it is better that economic results should not obtain a sort of sanction as being tintured with righteousness, when only a few drops of the tincture have been administered. It is better that Economics should keep their place as a science of observed facts.

At the present moment when war is being diagnosed as the worst disease of society, there

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are many voices to point out its origin in economic greed, and through rivalry in the exploitation of backward peoples. Military pomp and pride, the mere ambition of Emperors and Generals, must bear their share of the blame, but greed and oppression are the tap-root of war, and Ruskin, it happens, was foremost in saying so, as is pointed out in a later chapter.

The economic motive is behind many actions where it is not avowed. Since the elementary need of man is, and always has been, to make a living, and he tries to make it as pleasantly as possible, this must be so, and the laws which govern production, distribution and exchange are of prime importance for men in communities.

When Ruskin touched on an economic law, on a doctrine of the science which he thus erroneously blasphemed, he was remarkably correct ; he was an orthodox follower after all of much of the doctrine of Mill. He was " an utterly fearless and unscrupulous free trader." ¹ His instinct, the moral sanction to which he always looked—as Mill also did—as a guide to practice, told him that protection was a

¹ *Unto This Last*, Libr. ed. § 53, *n.*, small ed. p. 97, and *Stones of Venice*, iii. 168. This last passage was written just after the Repeal of the Corn Laws, when the question was hot.

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wicked action, forbidding to workers in other countries their right to earn their living in the way by which they could produce the most. "I mean by co-operation, not only fellowship between trading firms, but between trading nations ; so that it shall no more be thought (as it is now, with ludicrous and vain selfishness) an advantage for one nation to undersell another, and take its occupation away from it ; but that the primal and eternal law of commerce shall be of all men understood—viz., that every nation is fitted by its character and the nature of its territories for some particular employments and manufactures, and that it is the true interest of every other nation to encourage it in such speciality." ¹ "I do not admit even the idea of reciprocity. Let other nations, if they like, keep their ports shut ; every wise nation will throw its own open." ² He knew every point of the correct economic theory of free trade. He realized foreign commerce as exchange or barter, with the dependence of exports upon imports. This dependence, showing the true nature of International Trade, follows from the correct doctrine of currency. Ruskin emphasized this doctrine

¹ *Time and Tide*, Letter I, p. 5.

² *Unto This Last*, p. 97 n.

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repeatedly. He knew that every fall in the supply of commodities made the gold currency of less value. He knew that inflation by paper money similarly sent prices up. He was enthusiastic for a gold standard, not as being perfect, but being the best available.¹ Mill's still valuable chapter on International Trade and all current economic doctrine on currency are Ruskinian economy too. Also, when a disciple of the much depreciated Manchester School talked of *laissez faire* he generally meant : "Let Protection alone." His phrase was general, but in the days of Gladstone's chancellorships of the exchequer, the "Manchester" man was thinking mainly of the removal of tariffs. It would not be in accord with human psychology if the principle had not been pushed too far, and by friends and opponents alike the principle of governmental abstention from interference enlarged, and made universal. In calling for government action to determine wages and organize employment, Ruskin was simply uttering a need not yet felt. He was a twentieth century voice, heard too soon.

¹ See the privately printed Dialogue on *Gold*; Library ed. vol. xvii. p. 491, written in 1863, and the letter to *The Times*, on p. 489.

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But we must always avoid the snare into which the earlier economists fell, of assuming that their conclusions were rigid and absolutely correct. There can be no mechanical infallibility about Economics ; it is not accurate enough to be mathematically true. It expresses tendencies. In a word, it is a psychological, not a physical science. Its subject is not wealth, simply, but human motive in regard to wealth.

Students of the Political Economy of Adam Smith, Ricardo, Bentham and James Mill, find that these great founders of economic science, in whose debt we shall ever remain, assumed too much mechanical uniformity in men's actions, and did not give enough weight to the reaction of man upon his circumstances. They counted a man too much as a passively responsive machine. This is what led them to the doctrines since so seriously modified—the existence of a fixed Wages Fund, the “Iron Law of Wages,” the thesis that “A demand for Commodities is not a demand for Labour.”

John Stuart Mill began life under these influences, and his *Principles of Political Economy* contain them ; but in later life he abandoned his Wages Fund theory, gave greater weight to the human side, the variable and

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uncertain factor in economic problems, and under the influence of Comte and of the Socialists doubted the accuracy of much of his economic argument. This change was published in his review of the work of his friend Thornton, who had attacked the Wages Fund theory in 1869. It is in Mill's collected Essays.

The Political Economy which Ruskin attacked was that of Mill's *Principles* ; and to judge fairly of the controversy we must treat the science, not as it was left, in high universal abstraction, by Ricardo ; nor as worked up with rich historical material, cautious and well informed, as in Professor Marshall's writings, but (between these) as Mill left it in his first edition of 1848.

In estimating the extent to which Ruskin's attack was excusable, we need to know whether Mill overstepped the bounds of theory, of pure science—and became a political adviser and exhorter. This he certainly did, quite often in his book, and he says in his preface that it was part of his purpose to do so.

Ruskin says that it is when he is thus inconsistent with his own theory, and strays into practical teaching, that he begins to take any interest in him ; and certainly Mill gave, precisely because he was a philanthropist and a

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social reformer, room for a critic to come in and say : " Lo, you pretend to be a practical guide to conduct, and you are only taking account of low and selfish motives ; you are an unworthy exponent of human nature, if we are to regard you as taking it all for your province." The chapters chiefly referred to here are those on " The Advantages of a Stationary State," and on " The Futurity of the Labouring Classes."

Ruskin recognizes and admits this in a clever but naughty way :

" I should have regretted the need of pointing out inconsistency in any portion of Mr. Mill's work, had not the value of his work proceeded from its inconsistencies. He deserves honour among economists by inadvertently disclaiming the principles which he states, and tacitly introducing the moral considerations with which he claims his science has no connection. Many of his chapters are therefore true and valuable ; and the only conclusions of his which I have to dispute are those which follow from his premises." ¹ Mill made the distinction between science and social reform quite plain in his chapters, and left no room for confusion. Ruskin must have thoroughly understood this.

¹ *Unto This Last*, Libr. ed. § 58, small ed. pp. 109, 110.

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Full in the face of this theoretical investigation comes Ruskin's definition of Political Economy, with which he begins *Munera Pulveris* :

“Political Economy is neither an art nor science, but a system of conduct and legislature, founded on the sciences, directing the arts, and impossible, except under certain conditions of moral culture.”

Here we have an entirely different object. This Economy aims at telling us what we ought to do for the enriching and purifying of life upon the earth, and what the state ought to do for the same end. This is universal politics and social amelioration : frankly and definitely, not a science at all.

There need be no conflict between this comprehensive study of political ethics, including religion, art, and education among its principal departments—and that science which might usefully come in as one of those on which it is based. To be sure, both claim to be called Political Economy ; but that is only a verbal rivalry. As to that, Ruskin's Political Economy has by derivation the proper right to the term—the State's Housekeeping. But it is not always wise to follow derivations ; the scholastic Economy was in possession of the word, though

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properly speaking it was not *οικονομία* nor was it *πολιτική*. Ruskin's weakness for playing with etymologies, often curious ones, helped to maintain this rivalry in words.

There is room for both studies, the scholastic economies and the Ruskinian economy. That is my thesis.

How differently the criticism of Carlyle and Ruskin might have been launched. Ruskin might have said that he admitted that in business people must be assumed to follow their own interests, that is, that the "economic man" would stand as a general average in business relations. But he might have said, after that, every word that he wanted to say, about the insufficiency of this principle as a guide to conduct. He might have dwelt on the strength of loyalties and affections, and on the powerful economic value of good relations between masters and servants. He might have shown how misleading were economic results if acted on as a complete handbook of conduct even in business. He might have written *Unto This Last* with an introduction by John Stuart Mill, and everything positive or constructive left in it. The satire and sword-play might have been used for something else.

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Much of his attack might have taken the form of entirely sound but friendly criticism. Great play is made with a sentence of Ricardo's :¹ " Utility is not the measure of exchangeable value, though it is absolutely essential to it." This non-committal sentence does not carry us very far, and does not claim to be a definition, but is true as far as it goes. Ruskin makes hay of Ricardo's statement next following, that Labour was, in primitive abstraction at any rate, the sole regulator of price. Neither he nor Ruskin had reached the modern theory of " marginal values " which solves so many ancient puzzles and misunderstandings. Price is fixed where Demand and Supply meet : and it measures two things. It represents on one side the value in use of the last article produced ; and on the other the cost in labour of the production thereof. Then both sides are satisfied—the buyer and the seller. But the price does not represent the utility of the earliest articles produced—the first loaves of bread would be quite priceless,—nor the cost of the production of the first few easily grown crops. Both values are " final " or " marginal." This simple and permanent plan of determining price, which

¹ *Unto This Last*, § 60, small ed. p. 114.

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nobody can or should alter, is, put shortly, the terrible law of supply and demand, the very heart of economic theory, about which so much indignation is wastefully expended. If Ruskin's penetrating mind had been devoted to helpful criticism of the gaps left by the economists, they might have reached this theory much earlier. But Ruskin wrote in a state of noble rage—a bad state for the scientific temper. “Nothing in history,” he wrote, “has ever been so disgraceful to human intellect as the acceptance among us of the common doctrines of political economy as a science.”¹ This was chiefly because it was said to be a systematic disobedience to the first principles of its professed religion, because it taught “the love of money” and “mammon service”; it was “a science of becoming rich.” Once accept so terrible a misconception, and all the vials of the prophets' wrath are not too profuse. “To this science and to this alone (the professed and organized pursuit of money) is owing all the evil of modern days. I say all.”² Ruskin wrote in 1865 a letter to the *Daily Telegraph* in which he says people cannot

¹ *Unto This Last*, Libr. ed. § 55, small ed. p. 103. See also § 1.

² Letter to Dr. John Brown, Libr. ed. vol. xvii. p. lxxxii.

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get servants by political economy and the law of supply and demand—as though he had said they cannot be got by physics and the law of gravitation. To see his real attitude we must add a phrase of 1883 : “ While I admit there is such a thing as mercantile economy, distinguished from social, I have always said that neither Mill, Fawcett nor Bastiat knew the contemptible science they professed to teach.”¹

This attitude is pure disaster, comparable to the great *odia theologica* which have cursed the world. It is not necessary nor wise to take sides in an utterly baseless controversy. Let us rather examine the programme of the science.

Prof. Marshall gives the following list of the inquiries chiefly pursued by economic science² :—

“ How does economic freedom tend, so far as its influence reaches, to arrange the demand for wealth and its production, distribution and exchange ? What organization of industry and trade does economic freedom tend to bring about ; what forms of division of labour ; what arrangements of the money market, of wholesale and retail dealing, and what relations between

¹ Note to *A Disciple of Plato*, by Wm. Smart, p. 48, Libr. ed., xviii, lxxxiii.

² *Principles of Economics*, Bk. I. chap. vii. § 3.

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employer and employed? How does it tend to adjust values, that is, the prices of material things, whether produced on the spot or brought from a distance, rents of all kinds, interest on capital and the earnings of all forms of work, including that of undertaking and managing business enterprises? How does it affect the course of foreign trade? Subject to what limitations is the price of anything a measure of its real utility? What increase of happiness is *prima facie* likely to result from a given increase in the wealth of any class of society? How far is the industrial efficiency of any class impaired by the insufficiency of its income? How far would an increase of the income of any class, if once effected, be likely to sustain itself through its effects in increasing their efficiency and earning power?

“How far does, as a matter of fact, the influence of economic freedom reach, or how far has it reached at any particular time, in any place, in any rank of society, or in any particular branch of industry? What other influences are most powerful there? and how is the action of all these influences combined? In particular, how far does not economic freedom tend of its own action to build up combinations

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and monopolies, and what are their effects? How are the various classes of society likely to be affected by its action in the long run? What will be the intermediate effects while its ultimate results are being worked out; and, account being taken of the time over which they will spread, what is the relative importance of these two classes of ultimate and intermediate effects? What will be the incidence of any system of taxes? What burdens will it impose on the community, and what revenue will it afford to the State?"

Such then, is the subject matter of economic science spread out in some detail. But behind all these there are practical questions which give the chief motive to our interest in the subject; and though not within the actual range of the science, it will be of interest to us to hear the same authority state them. They vary very much from time to time. The earlier economists were occupied with the need of removing restrictions on free commerce, and government regulation generally, and they glorified economic freedom. We ask with Marshall:

"How should we act so as to increase the good and diminish the evil influences of economic freedom, both in its ultimate results, and in the

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course of its progress? If the first are good and the latter evil, but those who suffer the evil do not reap the good, how far is it right that they should suffer for the benefit of others?"

"Taking it for granted that a more equal distribution of wealth is to be desired, how far would this justify changes in the institution of property, or limitations of free enterprise, even when they would be likely to diminish the aggregate of wealth? In other words, how far should an increase in the income of the poorer classes and a diminution of their work be aimed at, even if it involved some lessening of national material wealth? How far could this be done without injustice, and without slackening the energies of the leaders of progress? How ought the burdens of taxation to be distributed among the different classes of society?"

"Ought we to rest content with the existing forms of division of labour? Is it necessary that large numbers of the people should be exclusively occupied with work that has no elevating character? Is it possible to educate gradually among the great mass of workers a new capacity for the higher kinds of work, and in particular for undertaking co-operatively

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the management of the businesses in which they are themselves employed ? ”

“ What are the proper relations of individual and collective action in a stage of civilization such as ours ? How far ought voluntary association in its various forms, old and new, to be left to supply collective action for those purposes for which such action has special advantages ? What business affairs should be undertaken by society itself acting through the Government, imperial or local ? Have we, for instance, carried as far as we should the plan of collective ownership and use of open spaces, or works of art, of the means of instruction and amusement, as well as of those material requisites of a civilized life, the supply of which requires united action, such as gas and water and railways ? ”

“ When Government does not itself directly intervene, how far should it allow individuals and corporations to conduct their own affairs as they please ? How far should it regulate the management of railways and other concerns which are to some extent in a position of monopoly, and again, of land and other things the quantity of which cannot be increased by man ? Is it necessary to retain in their full force all the

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existing rights of property, or have the original necessities for which they were meant to provide, in some measure passed away ? ”

“ Are the prevailing methods of using wealth entirely justifiable ? What scope is there for the moral pressure of social opinion in constraining and directing individual action in those economic relations in which the rigidity and violence of Government interference would be likely to do more harm than good ?

“ In what respect do the duties of one nation to another in economic matters differ from those of members of the same nation to one another ? ”

In fact, we have to deal with the problems of Socialism, of Co-operation, of Municipal action, of Luxury and of Trade Wars. He might have added Pauperism and Old Age Pensions, Standard Wages and Hours, and Nationalization of various kinds of property. There is a strong and audible echo of Ruskin's aims about these practical problems ; and one does not yet see why we cannot make room in our own minds both for economic science and the Ruskinian Economy to which these issues belong.

There are passages, too, in Mill, which Ruskin himself might have written, which look beyond Production and Distribution to the

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larger needs and joys of man. He is considering the stationary state of capital and wealth, when economic progress has ceased, when people are not always growing more numerous and more wealthy, a state dreaded by the older economists, and ever to be held at arm's length. But Mill says he thinks it would be better than our present condition. "I confess I am not charmed with the ideal of life held out by those who think that the normal state of human beings is that of struggling to get on, that the trampling, crushing, elbowing and treading on each other's heels, which form the existing type of social life, are the most desirable lot of humankind, or anything but the disagreeable symptoms of one of the phases of industrial progress. The northern and middle states of America are a specimen of this stage of civilization in very favourable circumstances, having apparently got rid of all social injustices and inequalities, that affect persons of Caucasian race and of the male sex, while the proportion of population to capital and land is such as to ensure abundance to every able-bodied member of the community who does not forfeit it by misconduct. They have the six points of Chartism, and they have no poverty; and all

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that these advantages do for them is that the life of the whole of one sex is devoted to dollar-hunting, and of the other to breeding dollar-hunters. The best state for human nature is that in which, while no one is poor, no one desires to be richer, nor has any reason to fear being thrust back by the efforts of others to push themselves forward.”¹

That is Ruskin without the eloquence ; that is his advice to stay in the station in which we have been placed, and not be always trying to get out of it. A little more from Mill :

“ I know not why it should be matter of congratulation that persons who are already richer than any one needs to be, should have doubled their means of consuming things which give little or no pleasure except as representative of wealth, or that numbers should pass over, every year, from the middle classes into a richer class, or from the class of the occupied rich to that of the unoccupied.”

This reminds one of the well-known passage where Ruskin speaks of those who try “to advance in life without knowing what life means, who mean only that they are to get more horses and more footmen and more

¹ Book iv. § 28.

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fortune and more public honours and—not more personal soul.”¹

As some injustice has been done to Mill, particularly by us the pupils and friends of his eloquent antagonist, I will quote a little more from him to show that though the laws of Nature were represented by him as hard, he was himself as Ruskinian as any of us. He suggests a limitation of the right of bequest, so that no one should receive by gift or inheritance more than a moderate independence, so that there might be “a well paid and affluent body of labourers ; no enormous fortunes, except what were earned and accumulated during a single lifetime ; but a much larger body sufficiently at leisure to cultivate freely the graces of life.” Just so does Ruskin tell us that a man who dies rich dies disgraced. Mill proceeds to express his dread of greater density of population, because it crowds out solitude, so needful for depth of character, and takes away wild natural beauty. The whole passage might have come from Brantwood.

As to machinery, Mill goes on in the very spirit of *Fors Clavigera* : “Hitherto it is questionable if all the mechanical inventions

¹ *Sesame and Lilies*, i. 42.

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yet made have lightened the day's toil of any human being. They have enabled a greater population to live the same life of drudgery and imprisonment, and an increased number of manufacturers and others to make large fortunes." I am afraid that with posterity John Stuart Mill may suffer in reputation from being the object of so much invective, embedded in peerless English, and written under a mighty spirit of prophesying. *Fors Clavigera* and *Unto This Last* will be read much longer than Mill's *Principles*, and future ages may describe him as a cold-blooded Philistine, when really he was among the best and wisest of men. Certain Stoics and Epicureans, of whom all we know is that they encountered Paul, have hardly had justice from the ordinary English reader of the Acts. Mill obtained the verdict of contemporaries : but the future is the charmer's.

In some ways these two protagonists, both of them among the princes of our race, were strangely alike in their history. Mill, born in 1806, was the elder by thirteen years. Both children were extraordinarily precocious, Mill with his Greek at two, Ruskin with his pencil and his poetry at seven. At sixteen Mill was writing in *The Traveller* in defence of his father

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and of Ricardo. From eighteen to twenty he contributed to the *Westminster Review* and other journals articles on the Game Laws, the Corn Laws, the Law of Libel and on a Paper Currency, and reviews of books on Economics. At this age Ruskin's poetry was appearing in *Friendship's Garland*, and at twenty-four he came out with the first volume of *Modern Painters*, with a fully developed style made in heaven, and an originality in his art criticism which made him a public man at once. Each of them, after a long and famous literary life, gave the world an autobiography it would not willingly lose.

They were both only sons, brought up with unusual solicitude, close parental control and remarkably severe if loving discipline. Their attachment to and regard for their parents was a great power with both, all their lives. The gravity, earnestness, and deep sense of responsibility taught in childhood never left either of them.

Both passed through the fires which try faith ; and there are reasons for believing in both cases that what might have been a happy marriage was frustrated by want of conventional orthodoxy. So that they both suffered for the cause of truth in the hardest of all ways. Each

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of them had only six or seven years of married life, and neither left any children.

Strangely enough, also, Mill was forty-one when his *Principles of Political Economy* was written, and Ruskin at forty-one brought out his papers in the *Cornhill*, under the title of *Unto This Last*, which are his counterblast to Mill.

Each of them found it necessary in later life to recant some of their earlier teaching, and each faithfully did so. Mill gave up the Wages Fund Theory he had learnt from his father, and Ruskin scatters the later editions of his earlier works with notes denouncing the dogmatic evangelicalism which runs through them, which he had learnt from his mother.

So, in tragic conflict, these two men are before us. Not that Mill ever replied. He died in 1872, and during his lifetime he could afford to ignore the eccentricities of an unstable genius, at whom all sober people smiled in pity. But now I would fain even for Mill's sake reconcile them. You have true tragedy, not when right meets wrong, the noble the ignoble, but when two principles, both noble, are brought into a conflict they cannot avoid—Mill, the Liberal, the rationalist, with his watchwords of equality,

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liberty and a free chance for all—and Ruskin the Conservative, the indignant enemy of mechanical progress, speaking ever of order and obedience, reverence and graded ranks :—Mill, a servant of present humanity, with but a faint critical hold on the Unseen ; Ruskin, emotional and inspired, who not seldom would fain call down fire from heaven on Mill's newly enfranchised citizens, because they blasphemed.

So that I conclude that scholastic Economics is a reliable, useful scientific enquiry, forming a basis for the very same practical aims which Ruskin has set us striving for, and written by men who loved their fellows and were conspicuous examples of uprightness and benevolence, truth-keeping and friends of their kind.

We know how unscrupulous men of business used their conclusions, particularly those conclusions which have not stood the test of criticism, as a sort of textbook of oppression, as giving a scientific necessity for starvation, and so excusing hardness of heart. That this was so, must be Ruskin's excuse for declaring war upon the economists. But it was a war wholly unnecessary ; it clouded his prophecy with confused issues, and it laid the Master himself among the wounded.

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It will be necessary, in order properly to express the scope of Political Economy, to examine more fully its definition of the two factors whose action and reaction upon one another form the subject matter of the science. These two factors are Man and Wealth. What is Man as an economic being? What is the "economic man"?

He is assumed by Mill and others¹ as a being who considers his own side of a bargain only, who in all contracts will do the best he can for himself, and who, in the use of his capital, and the direction of his labour, is influenced by an intelligent and passionlesseye to his own interests. He has no regard for custom, or public opinion, or compassion, or resentment, or personal partiality, or class prejudice.

Mill does not pretend that this person actually exists; but that the tendency of things is as though he did exist; and that it is most easy to assume his existence, and after that recognize the qualifications which other parts of human nature require us to put in, just as in mechanics we calculate what would happen if surfaces were smooth, and then allow for friction afterwards.

¹ *Unsettled Questions of Political Economy*, Essay V, 1884, and earlier in the *Westminster Review*.

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Ruskin's criticisms are not always fair. He writes :

“ Political Economy, being a science of wealth, must be a science respecting human capacities and dispositions. But moral considerations have nothing to do with political economy (says Mill). Therefore, moral considerations have nothing to do with human capacities and dispositions.”¹

Perhaps the logical fallacy is not very obvious, but it is there. Human capacities and dispositions touch moral considerations on one side, and they touch political economy on the other. But these two need not therefore be connected. Because a man has two relations, as a citizen and as a father, and because the state does not bring up his children, and the two relations are separate, we must not argue that the man has nothing to do with his family, because the state, with which he is also connected, has nothing to do with it. All this wrong criticism was produced by the obvious remark of Mill, that the ethical character of a taste for diamonds is not the economist's affair.

It is only as a first approximation, then, that economics postulates the monster known as the economic man ; cold, calculating, well informed,

¹ *Unto This Last*, small ed. p. 114.

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shrewd, selfish with the unthinking uniformity of a machine. It is perhaps clearer to say that it can take account only of such motives as are sufficiently regular and predictable to be worth so much in money. Some unselfish actions are of that kind, such as a man's service to his children, or if he be a Highlander to his third cousin ; and we can predict certain of his regular subscriptions. The Law of Supply and Demand applies to ministers and missionaries and hospital nurses, though their payment is all from charitable gifts. To some extent the Charity Fund is a steady sum in any nation. It could be predicted that when the national War Fund was absorbing large sums, other charities, particularly London charities, would suffer ; and such has been the case. The same phenomenon occurred to a less degree when General Booth was raising his Darkest England Fund. Here is a charitable motive steady enough to be measurable.

It is not assumed here, as so constantly asserted by Ruskin, that men are and must be treated as rogues. The argument of Ruskin was that the qualifications to be introduced into problems due to the fact that man is not an economic man, are not like allowances for friction, or other mechanical matters, but are organic and

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revolutionary. The right reply probably is that sometimes this is so, but far more generally not so.

When remarkable instances of unselfishness occur outside the family circle, where the economist expects and allows for them, they are told as instances of the unexpected. When the newspaper boys near the Mansion House are found giving an undisturbed beat to a lame boy who could not compete with them in running to customers, and refuse to sell a paper there, the admiring customer concludes his beautiful and kindly story by asking how many business men round the Mansion House would leave a rival in possession because of his weakness?

The definition of Wealth must now be considered. Mill defines it as consisting of "All useful and agreeable things which possess exchangeable value."

He decides to include in the wealth of a country such personal qualities, skill, energy, perseverance, as tend to make the man who possesses them industrially more valuable. A skilled cotton spinner is a greater national asset than a labourer; a skilled medical man who can restore to labourers their industrial efficiency, is also national wealth, a utility embodied in a person; but a gifted

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preacher, whose message may even make a man a less keen producer of wealth than he was before, would not be an instance of national wealth, unless he made, as he might, a drunkard or a loafer into a regular wage earner. So the actor, or the singer, or the orator, unless their work ultimately produces material goods, is not to be counted wealth in economics. There is evidently the usual difficulty about drawing the line.

What is more, the most precious parts of character are excluded from national wealth in the economic sense. Wealth, that is, is taken to mean property, and not, more generally, the means of true well-being. Again, the most necessary things are from their abundance not wealth. Air, sunshine, and water are not wealth where and when they are given profusely by nature ; though they are the most needful supports to life. But air which has to be pumped in by a ventilating fan has cost something, and is wealth ; sunshine which has passed through a coal measure and is brought to our firegrates on a winter's night is wealth, water turned on at our taps is wealth for which we pay a water-rate. We may come to import oxygen into our halls and theatres and lecture rooms, perhaps even

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into our cellar workrooms, and then it too will have a price and an economic value.

There is clearly room for much difference of opinion in detail here. And yet it will be plain to all that the subject matter of a science must be limited ; we must know when our studies begin and end. It is not demoralization which makes an economist deny holiness to be wealth, it is a classification of sciences. Holiness is not matter either, nor electricity, nor gas ; it does not come into Physics any more than into Economics. It comes into Ethics and Theology and practical Politics, and it is the most important thing in the world. It may be true, as Ruskin urges, that wealth is not any good to a miser or a spendthrift or a rogue ; that it is often Illth rather than Wealth, if it makes its user soft and slack and selfish, or proud and cruel. But nevertheless, it is an object of desire, of human motive ; and that is enough for the economist.

The mistake of the early economists before John S. Mill was in not recognizing, however, the reaction of man's possession of wealth upon his conduct as a producer ; how high wages might be remunerative, if they increased efficiency, and big fortunes wasted if they increased

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idleness. We really have to treat two factors, each of which is, in the language of Mathematics, an implicit function of the other—or, if that does not make it more clear—each of which acts upon and is acted upon by the other. The early economists lived in the age when steam engines and electric telegraphs were great and new achievements, when Chemistry was being reborn in the atomic theory, and Joule was proving the great generalization of the conservation of energy. They treated their subject—man in business—as if he were matter ; whereas he has biological characteristics, and is modifiable and can modify his environment. Our age, on the contrary, is concerned with the modification of characteristics under environment. It is the age of Darwin. Biological evolution is seen to govern the growth of men and societies ; and these, in writings of the dominant school of thinkers since Herbert Spencer, are seen to follow biological laws of growth. The Economic man is no exception.

John Stuart Mill begins his chapter defining wealth by remarking that everyone has a notion sufficiently correct for common purposes, of what is meant by wealth. This is not his definition ; he reaches that later : it is a reason-

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able introductory remark. But Ruskin assumes that this is his definition, and assails him for his lack of scientific precision and his looseness of thought, as though an astronomer were to begin by saying that everyone has a notion, sufficient for common purposes, of what is meant by a star. The criticism is the more unreasonable, when we find the critic himself doing the very same thing in his famous chapter on "The Nature of Gothic" in *The Stones of Venice*, in which, at the opening, the remark occurs: "We all have some notion, most of us a very determined one, of the meaning of the term Gothic." Ruskin goes on to play with the etymology of value; ¹ from *valor* and *valere*, meaning that which avails towards life and health; and says true wealth is what tends to life and the increase of its powers, not pearls nor topaz, but air and light and cleanliness. "To be wealthy is to have a large stock of useful articles," say the economists. What, he asks, is to "have"—has the embalmed body of Carlo Borromeo the golden crosier and the cross of emeralds on its breast? Has a gold-filled belt the man whom it drowns, or has he it? Does not "having" depend on the vital power

¹ *Unto This Last*, §§ 61-64, Libr. ed.; small ed. pp. 118-127.

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to use? What, nextly, is "useful"? Persons called wealthy may be inherently incapable of wealth, mere reservoirs in the stream of national produce, if not impediments in its course, and so causing "illth" rather than "wealth." Therefore the aim and end of Political Economy is to develop moral character and capacity for valiantly using valuables, and the great difficulty is that manly character is apt to suffer from possessing material wealth and also apt to cast it away. Wealth of character and wealth of goods tend to undermine one another.

"In a community regulated by laws of supply and demand but protected from open violence, the persons who become rich are, generally speaking, industrious, resolute, proud, covetous, prompt, methodical, sensible, unimaginative, insensitive and ignorant. The persons who remain poor are the entirely foolish, the entirely wise, the idle, the reckless, the humble, the thoughtful, the dull, the imaginative, the sensitive, the well-informed, the improvident, the irregularly and impulsively wicked, the clumsy knave, the open thief, and the entirely merciful, just and godly person."¹

With one further piece of Ruskin's teaching

¹ *Unto This Last*, § 65, or p. 128.

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on the nature of wealth, I think that the subject will be clear.

“ ‘ Rich ’ is a relative word implying its opposite ‘ poor ’ as positively as the word ‘ north ’ implies its opposite ‘ south. ’ Men nearly always speak and write as if riches were absolute, and it were possible by following certain scientific precepts (Ruskin’s capital error turns up here), for everybody to be rich. Whereas riches are a power like that of electricity, acting only through inequalities or negations of itself. The force of the guinea you have in your pocket depends wholly on the default of a guinea in your neighbour’s pocket. If he did not want it, it would be of no use to you ; the degree of power it possesses depends accurately upon the need or desire he has for it—and the art of making yourself rich, in the ordinary mercantile economist’s sense, is therefore equally and necessarily the art of keeping your neighbour poor.”¹

This is all true ; if by rich we understand, as the use of the word in common practice warrants, relatively wealthy. The possession of money is the possession of an order upon labour ; and it is of no use if there is no available labour needing it. Ruskin’s illustration is that of a large landed

¹ *Unto This Last*, § 27, or p. 40.

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proprietor who could get no servants to feed his cattle, mine his gold, plough his corn lands, because no one was in want of his wages. He must lead a life of severe and common labour to produce even ordinary comforts, and live in the midst of a waste desert. Therefore, what is meant by making oneself rich is to produce the maximum inequality between ourselves and our neighbours.¹

Ruskin is grievously unfair in saying that that is the object of mercantile (political) economy; that it is "the science of getting rich." Such a statement libels both the science and its expounders; and it contains, for Ruskin, an extraordinary looseness in the use of words. There cannot be a science of getting rich, that is an art or a craft. Science is organized knowledge, not practical faculty to do anything or get anything.²

How wide is the range of Ruskin's Economy, how practical its objects, how little of a science it is, how entirely an art, the art of practical government and production, will be further clear from this statement :

¹ *Unto This Last*, § 29, or pp. 43, 44.

² See in continuation of this the Apologue of the two sailors : *Unto This Last*, pp. 49-57 or § 33-7.

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“ Political economy (the economy of a State or of citizens), consists simply in the production, preservation and distribution, at fittest time and place, of useful or pleasurable things. The farmer who cuts his hay at the right time, the shipwright who drives his bolts well home in sound wood, the builder who lays good bricks in well tempered mortar, the housewife who takes care of her furniture in the parlour and guards against all waste in her kitchen, and the singer who rightly disciplines and never overstrains his voice, are all political economists in the true and final sense ; adding continually to the riches and well-being of the nation to which they belong.”¹

All this is quite true ; but not in any sense a rival study to scholastic Economics. The great misfortune is that the atmosphere of controversy and revolt runs through all this glorious gospel, so strong and true in its teachings, so perverse in its criticisms. The sum of the whole doctrine is put in memorable words near the close of *Unto This Last* :

“ There is no wealth but life. Life, including all its powers of love, of joy and of admiration.

¹ *Unto This Last*, Libr. ed. § 28, or pp. 41, 42 in small ed.

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That country is the richest which nourishes the greatest number of noble and happy human beings ; that man is richest who, having perfected the functions of his own life to the utmost, has also the widest helpful influence, both personal, and by means of his possessions, over the lives of others.”¹

All railing accusation is out of place. The business of the man whom Ruskin calls the “vulgar economist” is to theorize, his is to edify. The one is the theoretical engineer and surveyor for the house of the state ; his part in the *οικονομία* is that of a professional consultant. Ruskin is the actual builder ; round his guidance sound the clang of hammer and anvil, the actual stonemasons’ and plumbers’ tools ; under his eye grow in time the ivy and the flowers ; but it is not the business of the architect or surveyor or sanitary engineer to know all about these, still less to keep a supply of them in his office.

The vastness of the task Ruskin had undertaken is now plain to us and was pathetic for him. *Munera Pulveris* contains the definitions of the new science. No more of it has ever appeared in systematic scientific form. It is

¹ *Unto This Last*, § 77, or p. 156.

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touching to find the inspired artist reformer stopped again and again in his great attempt to write a complete guide to public action, by some subject needing special research. "I will treat of this when I come to" coinage or education, or whatever it might be ; ever promising, ever hoping, if so be by a *tour de force* of genius he might storm the city of Mansoul ; whereas, it needed all the corps of economic researchers, mining here and there into truth, making a breach here and there into the wall of the unknown, working on Parliamentary Returns and tables of statistics, on records of public registrars and clearing house reports, by patient inquiry to achieve a little at a time. Ruskin wrote for thirty years after the epoch-making date of 1860 ; and it is even now our task to systematize, if we can, his scattered contributions to practical Economy.

We may be glad, in John Ruskin's case, as in that of lesser prophets, that the greatness of men is measured, not like chains, by their weakest link, but rather like tides, by the highest they reach.

CHAPTER V

RUSKIN'S RECONSTRUCTION

THE teaching of Ruskin is generally piecemeal and unsystematic, but, happily, there is one exception to this. In collecting his *Cornhill* papers for publication as *Unto This Last* he wrote a Preface summarizing his practical proposals at their "worst." They are as follows :

1. Government Schools, in certain cases compulsory, wherein a child shall be taught

- (a) The laws of health, and healthful exercises.
- (b) Habits of gentleness and justice.
- (c) The calling by which he is to live.

Compulsory popular education was established ten years after this demand, and it was long overdue. It was quite central in Mill's programme and in that of the school of Cobden and Bright. Only Herbert Spencer, in obstinate and inflexible individualism, disapproved of State Schools, and only the Anglican and Catholic Churches, in their own interest, blocked the way. As to

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what is taught there, we are slowly learning Ruskin's lessons about physical and moral training, and in the continuation schools and the technical schools are advancing to trade instruction also ; though we are far behind Munich and other German cities in this regard. More will be found on this on pp. 175-8 in Chap. VI. The recent orders of the Board of Education distinctly recognize some difference of subjects for urban, rural and sea-side children.

2. Government workshops for all articles, in fair competition with private ventures, and turning out nothing that was not genuine and of good quality.

Broadly speaking, this has not matured. Concerning it we may use Ruskin's own words on the whole scheme : " It is only possible to answer for the final truth of principles, not for the direct success of plans."¹ The right attitude, I would suggest, is to develop on practical lines of utility, and have work done by whatever agency does it most effectively. This is Ruskin's drift. It looks as though municipal milk and beer, municipal houses and coal, as well as heat and light, municipal theatres and opera, and government transport and electrical

¹ *Unto this Last*, Preface, p. 7.

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power, were already with us in idea, if not yet in realization. The method is one for gradual application. Every step will, very properly, be contested. The experience of the transaction of business by Government during the Great War has just now strongly reinforced faith in private enterprise. We should keep an open mind. No high or final principle comes in, and dogma and prejudice are out of place.

Hitherto Government has controlled and inspected, rather than itself carried on the businesses of the country. Very few things are now left wholly to perfectly free competition. Later on Ruskin gave up Government workshops in favour of businesses owned and managed by Trade Gilds, thus anticipating the sequence of public thought in later years. See below in this Chapter.

3.* The unemployed to be taught, or employed at fixed wages, or medically treated, or coerced to painful labour, according to the need of each case.

This close pastoral care by public authority has never yet been realized. It has been left to private philanthropy, guided at one time by the Elberfeld system as practised in the industrial towns on the Rhine. As in manufactures the

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State has guided and inspected business, rather than conducted it, so its Labour Exchanges and its unemployment allowance and Insurance against sickness have done much to ease and diminish the pain of unemployment. But, of course, this is only a stage in our progress. And the comprehensive lines of Ruskin's case for the orphans of Great Business may well be earnestly remembered as a standard to work towards. We have at any rate left behind us mere reliance on the terrors of starvation and death as the only spur to industry in the Great Society, as the present world of vast production and exchange has been called.¹

4. Comfort and home for the old and destitute, free from the slur of the Poor Law.

This has been provided by Old Age Pensions.

Thus Ruskin's schemes are being or are on the way to be realized, in quite remarkable detail. How much, uttered by leading writers in 1862, remains so fresh as these in 1920? Ruskin proclaimed some truths too early for his peace of mind, but not for the service of men. The characteristic novelty of the proposals was that they were social, not political, though

¹ By Graham Wallas, in his book with that title. See later in this chapter on Ruskin's Bishops, p. 141.

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written in a period when political reforms occupied the forefront of progressive thought. They were no doubt a necessary stage. We should not belittle them in disappointment. For without a democratic franchise no social reforms could have been achieved. Ruskin's proposals are also extremely moderate, and essentially conservative. He declares his disbelief in "the common Socialist idea of the division of property,"¹ though, as land is to be in the hands of those who can use it best, there was to be much compulsory purchase, a practice with which we are increasingly familiar, for housing, for allotments, and for small holdings. Nationalization of railways is definitely part of the programme, as we should expect.²

The most radical change concerned Wages. Ruskin declared that wages should be fixed and steady under the responsibility of either the Government or the Craft Gilds, and should be independent of the number of people competing for work. As usual, he blamed the economists because this was not so in nature, as though physiologists were to blame for indigestion. But, as mere economics, he understood the doctrine,

¹ *Unto This Last*, § 79, n.

² *Munera Pulveris*, § 128.

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and accepted its truth. He says that the cheapening of bread under the absence of the Corn Laws would cause wages "to fall permanently in precisely the same proportion."¹ That is, he accepted the "supply price" of wages—being the maintenance which the labourer under competition would accept.

The great issue for human welfare was then, and is now, whether there is a supply price for wages above the merest starvation line. Labour, so far, like commodities, has its price determined by the reciprocal action of the buyers and sellers of it. On the side of demand the buyers cannot give more than the value of the product of the last labourer they engage. On the side of supply the labourer would change his trade, or not have children, or not bring up his children to that trade, or he would starve and die, unless he received what he considered a maintenance. This is the supply price. And in any given trade, wages are fixed at the point where demand and supply are both satisfied. Enough labourers are employed to make the least valuable worth the required maintenance and no more. Now the economists, arguing from the phenomena they saw

¹ *Unto This Last*, § 53, small ed. pp. 96-8.

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believed, with Malthus, that there was no decent supply price for labour in practice, that people would multiply to the very limit of subsistence. Hence they deduced the terrible doctrine of the Iron Law of Wages, that wages tend to a starvation level, because they thought first that food,¹ and afterwards that capital,² was fixed at any time, or increased very slowly. Finally, J. S. Mill taught that fluid capital or the Wages Fund, that famous centre of controversy, being fixed, the total capital available for wages had to be divided between an ever multiplying number of wage earners, some of whom were therefore always starving.

This treatment of Labour as governed by the same law of supply and demand as commodities, is the only way it can be treated as subject matter of a science dealing with the production, distribution and exchange of wealth. But no one would stop there, shutting his eyes to the fact that behind the labour stands the labourer, a human being, with all the spiritual and emotional gifts and needs of a man. Only military authority treats men so. Even an economist, writing on labour as a commodity, proceeds to explain how it differs from material

¹ Malthus.

² Ricardo and James Mill.

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commodities—how slow is its reaction on the side of supply—how high wages up to a point produce a still higher quality of labour, and so forth. Business management, also, is a commodity subject to the same law, but I have never heard that the General Managers of Railway Companies feel degraded for that reason to the mere level of slaves.

Unluckily the economists, influenced by the poverty that followed the last great war, which ended in 1815, concluded that the unskilled labourer would multiply till his children starved. They saw in fact starvation rampant in England.

This was why Political Economy was called by Carlyle the Dismal Science. But the economists were no more responsible for it than theologians are for the Judgment Day, perhaps much less so. Ruskin believed and hated the doctrine, and so, in fact, was an orthodox Millite. And both he and Mill had their remedies. Mill recommended education, emigration and small families. Ruskin appealed to the state or the guilds. In time Mill came to the same point of view, and died a Socialist. He was able to do this because he was persuaded by Thornton that the Wages Fund theory did not hold ; that in fact workers produced their own wages, with

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the help of some capital to oil the wheels, that is, to fill the gap in time caused by distribution under the machinery of payment. This occurred in 1869 after *Munera Pulveris* had been published in *Fraser's Magazine* in 1862 and 1863, but before it came out in book form in 1872 ; and it is grievous that these two men did not consciously co-operate. Ruskin's method of controversy, possibly drove Mill to silence.

The central blast of Ruskin's attack was against this—ultimately abandoned—doctrine of hopelessness. I do not mean that we may be quite cheerful about free competition in wages ; for there are departments of labour so helpless that they cannot obtain a decently living wage.¹ To meet this, choice of employment is necessary, but cannot always be found for physically weak or mentally ill-qualified people. The nation has decided to carry out in specified trades the Ruskinian principle of the fixed living wage, enforced by the Sweated Industries Acts. Under these more and more trades may and will come. The economic storm of the war has broken down the equable course of free competition, and has

¹ Ruskin's disciple, the late Professor Wm. Smart of Glasgow, has written a book to show that there may be no supply price to wages.

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caused regulation of wages and prices on all sides. We must not speak as if this were a normal development either of socialism or of competition. We have suffered under it as part of the evil of war. The benefits of competition require time, and a fair field for all forces. There will still be much done by provision of alternative employment on the land, by the investment of capital in developing local industries, and indirectly, by housing, education and temperance reform, to diminish the remnant of the helpless victims of sweating. Behind these the nation will probably soon stand, committed to a national minimum in wages and in hours. Above these government minima stand the various Trades Union fixed rules. All are Ruskinian,¹ and Mill would rejoice in them too.

A generation ago a national minimum wage had the support of Socialists of the school of Sidney and Beatrice Webb, and of J. A. Hobson.² For a long time it was not orthodox. I remember hearing a Professor of Political Economy speaking on this subject twice, at an interval of about ten years. The first time he summed up against it, pointing out how a

¹ See *Arrows of the Chace*, ii. 97.

² *John Ruskin, Social Reformer*, p. 138.

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minimum tended, in Australian experience, to become a maximum, with certificates of invalidism or incapacity easily obtainable to authorize a lower wage. The second time he was for a minimum wage, as what progressive thinkers hoped for. The steps have, of late, become rapid. Miners had their wages fixed by the Government after the Coal Strike of 1912, and again, after the Sankey Commission in 1919. The Railway and Transport Workers are also under Government protection. An international Labour Charter is part of the Peace of Versailles, which must lead to an international minimum. It will be a delicate undertaking to work it out with any completeness. Within a nation the cost of living varies from place to place; the value of money rises and falls as general prices fall or rise. Internationally, between San Francisco, New York, London, Constantinople, and Yokohama, the differences forbid uniformity of wage. Nobody can compel an employer to employ anybody whose work results in no profit. Some people exist who are not worth a minimum wage, unless it is too low to be acceptable. There will have to be provision for these. Pensions for Old Age and invalidity will assume larger proportions. The

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race will have to worry out this complex tangle of man with his environment. What is clear is that we have reached the Ruskinian standpoint about it.

Fors Clavigera is the most remarkable of the writings of Ruskin. He who has read *Fors*, or a large part of it, knows Ruskin, and if he loves and reveres the author, has become a Ruskinian. But without reading *Fors* no man or woman can become a Ruskinian. In it you become intimate with the man. He talks to you like a friend, button-holes you very much as Socrates did, invites you to laugh with him, and join in laughs at himself, tells you all his troubles, and the causes of the ups and downs of his spirits, tells you of his loneliness and his hopes and intentions, shows you his accounts every month, tells you where he has lost money, and to whom he has given it away, lets you see his letters and his replies to them, and holds you, by the personal power of him, while he pours vials of prophetic denunciation upon Society only to be equalled in the pages of the Hebrew Prophets ; and then clinches it all with "Mind you, I mean every word of it ; no exaggeration here."

Fors is a book—a message:—it is often playful in style, the matter all scattered. The

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subject changes from page to page ; nothing in it can be referred to without that Queen of Indexes which accompanies it: but the unity of its subject is in the unity of the author. You carry on an idea, cropping up under all sorts of irrelevancies and chance illustrations—and you carry on certain jokes too, or humorous allusions, as we all do in common life. This miscellany, I am persuaded, will attract readers longer than the stately symmetry of *Modern Painters*, or the laborious detail of the *Stones of Venice*. Who but Ruskin could have brought thus out of his treasury things new and old ?

We shall look in vain for a completely worked out system of business and legislation in Ruskin's writings. His Utopia is delightfully worked up here and there in detail, but it has great gaps ; it often seems to raise more difficulties than it settles ; and it is not always consistent with itself.

Indeed, one could not expect completeness or real mastery of the problem, either from the man or from the nature of the subject. From the man, because the prophet and the practical administrator are rarely combined. Comte went into detail, and we do not much value the Positivist detail. The prophet is the man with the

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clear vision and hot heart. The practical administrator must sit on committees and keep secretaries, and meet deputations ; he must check accounts and hold dinner parties. What we desire is that practical men should give ear to the prophet.

Secondly, the subject is too vast and complicated for complete treatment. Great as has been the volume and secure the conviction of the attacks on our present social system, how very little in the way of stable fabric exists to-day in confessed substitution for it. Socialist and Communist colonies have failed through their principles being in advance of the practice of the men who had to pioneer their course. Of the thirty or forty whose history has been collected, most have broken up, a few with profit to the members, but most with loss. Religious communities have, of course, shown the greatest tenacity. The Shakers are now diminishing and discouraged, though they own some of the richest land in America, and are commercially connected with a valuable property besides, known as Mother Siegel's Syrup. The Doukhobors from Russia now settled in the far West of Canada, have saved themselves by their communism under persecution. They again are

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bound by a mighty religious bond. But many are being absorbed by the society around, and their primitive faith in their leader Peter Verigin as an incarnation of God, will hardly survive Canadian education. We will not, then, expect to see a complete reconstruction of society. Ruskin's is most fully worked out in *Time and Tide* : but *Fors* is thickly scattered with it too.

Roughly, then, and in the large, Regulation and Co-operation, rather than Competition and Economic freedom, are to be the guiding principles. That is, Ruskin is a Socialist. But he is no revolutionary nor divider up of property. He desired all things to be gradual, and was too wise to suppose that anything sweeping could be done at once, or indeed very much of any kind for a long time. To his private correspondents in *Fors* the advice was always given to stay where they were, and do as well as they could what they had in hand. Ruskin, again, is a Socialist of the aristocratic variety. He believed in graded ranks, and in people staying in the class they were born in. He did not say that everybody was equal. He was also of the earnestly religious type of Socialist. When I add that he considered that he and Carlyle were

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the only two Conservatives left in England, and that he was a Tory of the type of Scott and Homer, I may perhaps have succeeded in leaving my readers fairly confused in mind : as every one who tries to classify Ruskin will become.

As to Wealth, Ruskin proposes that there shall be a legislative upper limit to a man's property ; and that those whose superfluity is skimmed off by law should have titles instead and be employed in public service. As noted again in the chapter on Usury later, there are various ways of securing this : by steeply graduating the Income Tax and the Death Duties at the upper end, or by limiting the legal right of bequest, either by saying that you must not bequeath more than a certain sum to one person, or that a person must not inherit more than a certain total sum from all sources. These startling innovations would no doubt put an effective check on accumulation, if the State succeeded in fighting the ingenuity of the lawyers.

All interest on money he entirely forbids. This I deal with in Chapter VII.

All land is to be bought by the State from the landlords, and the aristocracy, living on the

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Government annuities thus created, are to become the legislators and leaders of the people. I don't know whether he knew them very well. At any rate these annuities appear to me to be of the nature of interest.

War is to be managed by personal encounters between some of the military aristocrats and the aristocrats of the enemy, to save butchery of peasants and much needless devastation. A kind of international Rugby football match without referees might meet the case—where the honour of England was really at stake. It is a simple suggestion ; but soberly Ruskin loathed war—particularly wars for conquest and all modern war by machinery and for the benefit of capitalists. This is shown in Chapter VIII.

Our factory system and the crowding into towns he detested ; though he gives us no practical suggestions towards ending it except that most steam power should be abandoned—not quite all. There is a curious prophecy too about electricity superseding steam and smoke. We are beginning on hopeful lines here with Mond gas, central electrical power stations, and Garden Cities—if only we could and would compel our factories to stop making smoke,

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the greatest curse of the landscape. This is treated more fully in Chapter IX.

Our Government must also take heed to all means of keeping our population in the country.

Population Ruskin deals with fantastically by permitting marriages only to young men and young women after passing a suitable examination in business or domestic qualifications. He would provide them, on marriage, with an income for seven years from the State. If they had a private income beyond this minimum it must accumulate ; so that all young couples start life on the same standard of expenditure. This is the most drastic of his regulations, and the most out of reach.¹

Under land tenure from the State each person was to hold no more than he could properly make use of—a system of permanent peasant proprietors, that is, at a quit rent ;—the land inalienable in title, and to descend by primogeniture.

We have also the somewhat obscure remark² that bread, water, and the roof over his head must be tax (i.e. rent) free to every man. Methods

¹ *Time and Tide*, Letter XX, § 124.

² *Fors*, LXXXIX, p. 135. But *v.* pp. 182-4 below.

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of administration are to be left to settle themselves. Also, "every man is to build his own house to his mind, and to have a mind to build it to."

As a system this leaves large gaps. What are to be the exact duties of the aristocratic annuitant landowners, and who are they to be? There is an echo of Plato's "Guardians" in their position and duties: indeed they seem very like in their functions to those hierarchical beings. It may have been from Plato too that Ruskin learnt to emphasize the degradation of continuous mechanical work, particularly that which is connected with the mechanical use of fire.

The Church is, as we have seen in Chapter III, to be exactly on the Quaker model. No one is to be paid for preaching. The preachers are to earn their living like other men; and the distinction between clergy and laity is to be absolutely done away. "Of clergymen's usual work, admonition, theological demonstration, and the like I shall want very little done indeed, and that little done for nothing! for I will allow no man to admonish anybody, until he has previously earned his own dinner by more productive work than admonition." The lesson

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on humility to religious persons in *Time and Tide* is very amusing.¹

Turning to the business world, the deadliest war of Society would be against occult stealing, by making bad goods, by adulteration, and passing off sham articles. These practices would be guarded against by the formation of trade guilds. Ruskin enumerates in Letter LXXXIX of *Fors* twenty-one trades. The men of each trade are to form themselves into a guild, buy land and buildings, regulate prices and qualities, and become, in fact, capitalist employers. Retail dealers are to be salaried officers under the guild. Such is the proposal of *Fors* of 1879, and *Time and Tide* of 1867. In *Unto This Last* of 1860 the Government is to have the workshops, not private guilds. Ruskin began to think his later plan of private guilds more possible as years went on. Also, and always, property is to be acquired by the guilds by honest payment and voluntary bargains. It is very striking how prophetic these schemes are of the proposals now known as Guild Socialism, treated in the next chapter, at present the most popular form of socialistic reconstruction. They are, indeed, a sketch of the very thing.

¹ Letter XVIII.

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Competition, outside the guilds or Government shops, is always allowed—"as a safety valve for outlet of irrepressible vice." He believed in the cutaneous and curable eruption of such, rather than in forcing it into the system of the body politic—a wise and cautious idea, in no way that of a blind optimist. Another reason for this permission of outside competition was to provide scope for erratic ingenuity and original genius, and to conserve individual initiative ; also to protect the rights of foreigners trading here. There is also much other sensible elasticity of arrangement hinted at. Honesty, truthfulness, freedom from oppression, some plan by which all the good national elements could become availing instead of being neglected and choked off, these are the objects of his trade guilds. The difficulty of foreign competition at low prices he does not touch, except to anticipate for a far future a similar international guild system.

One can easily see that increased facilities for combination are putting it into the power of combines and trusts to fix qualities and prices in a way the men of 1867 would never have expected. Is it beyond hope that what combinations of capital and management can do,

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labour combinations may do, for more public ends? Then indeed out of the eater will have come forth meat. "The lion and the bear shall feed," and the capitalist shall dine like the labourer. "They shall not hurt nor destroy" in all my holy workshops and markets.

One of the most startling, but at the same time, most thought-compelling proposals for the ideal State are Mr. Ruskin's Bishops. The *ἐπίσκοπος* of the New Testament was an Overseer, a man who looked after the members of the Early Church, the agent of their relief, and the supervisor of their conduct. This order of men Ruskin proposes to declericalize and to municipalize. The preaching, we shall remember, is to be separated from pastoral care, and to be done gratuitously by unofficial ministers. This leaves no link between the State and the family; even the action of the Fatherland as a father, now afforded by the State clergy, being done away with. Therefore, over every fifty or a hundred families there is to be elected, for life, a Bishop, who is to be a friendly counsellor, and to keep a record of all notable events—a much extended public registrar. All exceptional treatment which special circumstances may render desirable, any mitigation of ordinary law, is

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arranged through him. Where law is to be so pervasive, some cushion for its impact would certainly be necessary. He bears to the Government the relation which the Charity Organisation Society bears to the Poor Law Guardians, or an Inebriate Home to the Jail, or (in theory) Equity to Common Law. Thus the terrible loneliness and neglect of the poor, and haunts of undiscovered vice, would no longer be possible. The whole episcopal action was to be elastic, the methods patient, gentle, not compulsory, and not intrusive. The Bishops were to be paid officers, and they had to report to a higher officer called a Duke (*Time and Tide*, XIII).

We now approach the question of national leadership. So great was Ruskin's distrust of the People, his hatred of Liberty and Equality, that he fell back upon our Aristocracy, commonplace as he knew it to be, for the power of governance. He is not so far out of our current national habit. We know well that any good, hardworking peer, baronet or landed magnate of good family, has at once a favourable hearing, and possesses by birth an open door to the confidence of the people ; and he has only to show that he deserves it, to maintain it with ease. We democrats love a lord. So the Home Office and police

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work, also the Judgeships and the officering of the citizen army are to be the work of the present landed gentry ; the careful husbanding of the nation's resources in a glorified Board of Trade is to be the work of the present kings of business. The Education Department and the now non-existent Artistic Department, the Board of Works, together with the few necessary Doctors, and the Musicians, are the third department of upper-class work, to be undertaken by the professional classes. It will be remembered that there are to be no hired soldiers or clergy and very few lawyers.

For the realization of this Utopia, no violence is to be used. As a prophet with an ethical gospel he entirely distrusted methods of physical force, as leaving you in reality just the men you were before, only damaged by the conflict in mind and person and estate. Nor did he, as a Conservative and a believer in continuity, look with favour or hope on a general confiscation bill, abolishing rent and interest. The whole thing had to be done by converting the upper classes, those classes whose glory is in living in comfort and pride served by the labour of others, and whose alienation from the multitude is graven deep into their characters by every one of

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their cherished habits. We have seen that the landlord would become an annuitant, the parson transformed, the solicitor and the barrister nearly wiped out. Many merchants, most bankers and stockbrokers and all shareholders in banks, if and when interest is abolished, would find themselves without the profits on which, it is to be feared, much of their happiness depends. Some of these persons would become public officers, living on salaries and earning them. Manufacturers would become profit sharers, and be invited to join a Guild. Doubtless the liquor interest would find that it had a stern master, though but little detailed allusion to it is made, and prohibition is not intended.

If you have ever tried to convince a man by some highly abstruse, or at any rate, long and intricate process of thought, of truths or proposals which upset his whole career, blighted his interests, and wrote him down a useless and pernicious person—if, for instance, you have explained the wickedness and folly of Protection to a friend from Pennsylvania, or the theoretical righteousness of Home Rule to a friend from Belfast, or the innate errors of Vivisection to a physiologist, or discoursed on Homœopathy to your own medical man, you will be able to

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foresee the blank look of polite indifference with which Ruskin's schemes would be likely to be received by the Marquis of B. or by the distinguished directors of your bank. Why am I not to make cotton look like silk ? will be asked by certain very excellent Lancashire firms. Is shoddy not to continue its useful, if humble career ? is the cry of certain parts of the West Riding ; and some of the metallic business of Birmingham would be a cause of much searching of heart. And there is not a retired old lady living in her bower of roses from the Lake District to Penzance whose peace of mind and perhaps nourishment of body would not, if interest were truly abolished, cease. I always notice that reformers who would abolish interest do not explain what they would do with the large class of ladies of all ages, and the smaller class of elderly men who, after all, do constitute the greater part of the technically idle class, and who are totally unable to earn a living ; since neither the arts of dress nor of graceful conversation have a market value.

It must be plain to us that any wholesale conversion and sudden awakening of the social conscience in Ruskin's direction is not to be expected. Neither the intellectual conviction,

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nor the moral power to carry it out if formed, will be produced except in a few instances, here and there. The astonishment and delight with which we hear of the doings of exceptional employers show how rare they are. Every year, of recent years, has seemed darker and darker to some of us, in noting the treatment of public affairs by the wealthy, and the extent to which "Things are in the saddle, and ride mankind."

Nor is it possible to an employer, even if intellectually convinced and morally sound, to raise his wages much above the rate paid by his competitors, to avoid drawing from the business wherewithal to pay interest on capital, nor, generally, to improve quality, with or without improving price.

We must fall back on legislation, on democratic conviction expressed by the organ of the national will, to bring about any portion of this scheme. We shall have to move all together, if we move at all. Take a comparative trifle, trifling compared to these large proposals—the weekly half-holiday. This can only be taken by all or none of a given trade in a given town; or take the Bank Holidays, popular benefits only to be won on the floor of the House

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of Commons, and which cost so much effort that a certain worthy banker has been canonized for his labours in obtaining St. Lubbock's Day. Yet I am of Ruskin's mind thus far—that any growth of an enlightened moral sentiment will most easily permeate the voting masses from individuals of the educated classes.

Ruskin cherished no delusions about it. He says : “ You need not think that even if you obtained a majority of representatives in the existing Parliament, you could immediately compel any system of business, broadly contrary to that now established by custom. If you could pass laws to-morrow, wholly favourable to yourselves, as you might think, because unfavourable to your masters, and to the upper classes of society, the only result would be that the riches of the country would at once leave it, and you would perish in riot and famine. Be assured that no great change for the better can ever be easily accomplished, or quickly ; nor by impulsive ill-regulated effort, nor by bad men ; nor even by good men, without much suffering.”¹

The scheme as a whole has never been systematized, nor worked out in detailed pro-

¹ *Time and Tide*, p. 19.

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posals. Still less has it been hinged on to our present social structure. It is a prophetic forecast, an inspiration of genius ; it is a bow of glorious hue set in the clouds. When Ruskin wrote his economics the view was that by each man doing the best for himself the general good was automatically best advanced—an unseen hand behind human activities arranged the world's welfare with nothing but individual selfishness to do it with.

We no longer accept this as a complete account of the matter. We recognize that that would be a wild-wood kind of a cosmic order ; and that under it human affairs would be left to the same kind of governance as that of the forest and the jungle. The wolf pack and the wild bramble are all very well in their scale and their place ; but for humanity this unrestrained individual luxuriance, with its terrible cost and waste, is now felt by us to be only a first approximation to society. It is the point whence we begin, not the goal we aim for. It is safe and stable as a foundation ; it cannot be upset or overthrown, for it is actually itself the ground ; and there is nothing to overthrow. Guilds, Monopolies, Trusts, also Governments and Charities are built upon it to regulate it ; and

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they grow, and in time may decay and die, leaving the jungle of free competition to overrun once more the painful clearings. But out of the wilds men have in fact made their lawns and gardens, their orchards and their fields of wheat ; they have built them palaces and cities which are permanent and stable enough, though not everlasting. The higher law of civilization is successfully holding at bay the wild tendencies. The millions of stray seeds, the storms of wind and crackings of frost, if let alone, would in time reduce a watering place like Scarborough to a green cliff side ; still Scarborough exists and will exist, and justify its existence. Similarly there are limitations, orderly arrangements, which may be put upon the wild nature of economic freedom ; and we may make a better world thereby. We all know how much is accepted already in the way of civilized restraint. When Parliament is free to attend to home affairs almost every Act is a regulation or limitation of individual freedom, or it is the taking up by Government of what had been previously left to the individual. The long list of municipal and imperial activities must be too familiar to need repetition here. We are indeed rushing rapidly in that direction. Can

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we go no further? Are we necessarily at the end just here?

I will try to outline in the following chapter a few ways in which we may. That is, we will test Ruskin by the changes of the last half century and those which are looming near; and see how much of his teaching abides our question.

CHAPTER VI

RUSKIN'S ECONOMICS TO-DAY

IT is well known that none of the proposals in the Preface to *Unto This Last*, summarized above, nor all of them together, satisfy the ideas of the most vigorous reformers of the moment. Nothing less than the abolition of all production and distribution for individual profit is believed by many earnest and experienced men to go to the root of our social diseases. On the other hand, State Socialism has fallen into discredit. The experience of Government officials in war time has taken all the gas out of that particular experimental balloon.

Guild Socialism is now the favourite form. Under this the government of the country is to be twofold, from top to bottom. Guilds of producers are to own and run businesses, having eliminated the capitalist as such, and are to be organized into local, county, and national guilds of the workers in that business. Then all the national guilds unite in a Parliament of producers, who govern wages, and, I presume, the import

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and export trade. Over against this stand our present geographical constituencies and our present Parliament, which is the nation organized as consumers. The State, represented by the present geographically elected Parliament, is to remain supreme, is to be the ultimate owner of the property used by the Guilds, with the right to tax it, by a quit rent. The Guilds are to be the taxable units.¹

Rent, interest and profits are to be abolished. No provision for compensation is part of the proposal ; but no doubt that would depend upon circumstances, and upon what could be arranged. It would also give rise to much difference of opinion among the advocates of the new order. And much would depend on whether it came gradually and peacefully, by consent—or after a revolutionary general strike—or, again, after civil war. One hears of an intention to respect life interests, but no more. Clearly this issue

¹ The literature of the Guild movement is considerable and growing. Mr. G. H. D. Cole has written *The World of Labour*, *Labour in War Time*, *Self Government in Industry*, *Labour in the Commonwealth*, and *Chaos and Order in Industry*, and edits *The Guildsman* (office of the National Guilds League, 39 Cursitor Street, London, E.C. 4). Mr. A. R. Orage has written *National Guilds*, *The Alphabet of Economics*, and written much in his paper, *The New Age*; and Mr. S. G. Hobson has written *National Guilds*.

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will subject our people to a political test which may be beyond their strength, and may, if we are not guided by justice and mercy, lead to a generation of violence and the ruin of many hopes.

The ideals behind the movement are noble—to give the workman a proprietary interest in his work, to break down the pernicious distribution of wealth which economic freedom has brought about, to bring up a healthy and well-bred race, not a well-bred class only, to put public service in place of profit as the motive for labour; to banish the wretched insecurity of unemployment, and take away the bored life of the idle rich; to use the surplus wealth of industry for the education of the whole people and for a full life for all. Nothing less than this is the guerdon of success.

If the Guild is to guarantee a wage to all its workers, well and ill, under good trade and bad, in defiance of changes in demand due to fashion or invention, or to changes in weather or to foreign imports, there will certainly have to be great powers in the Guild for the transfer of labour from where it is not wanted to where it is. Also, seeing that only a certain number of workers are wanted in the pleasanter occupations,

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some authority in the guilds will have to assign their duty to all labourers, instead of leaving the choice to competition with the sharp tooth of hunger behind it.

The coercion of the idle workman will be quite a large task ; for slackness cannot be summarily dealt with as now by dismissal. It is such rocks of human frailty that will be the danger to the navigation of any ordered system. Are all childless women to be made to work for guild wages ? Are married and unmarried men to be paid alike ? Is any saving to be permitted ? What machinery will determine prices, when demand and supply are denied their free play ? It is not the place of this book to answer these questions or to pronounce a final opinion. It is enough to see that opinion is strongly tending in this direction, and that it is in the sequence of *Fors Clavigera*.

That this is, however, the direction of advance, one is led to believe, from the existence of a half-way house. There is in every movement always the moderate mass and the progressive vanguard, and they sometimes turn their guns heartily upon one another. The moderate proposal, the rival to Guild Socialism, is that of the Whitley Councils for bringing in the present capitalist

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employers and their workmen as collaborators in the conduct of businesses, and as joint constituents of a trade Parliament.

The Builders' Parliament,¹ or "Industrial Council for the Building Industry," was the forerunner of the Whitley Councils, but is on more thoroughgoing guild lines. Mr. Malcolm Sparkes, a young director of a carpentry and cabinet-making business in Willesden, was mixed up as an employer in a disastrous building strike in 1914. Hopeless of any solution by hostile and suspicious bodies of organized masters and organized men, never meeting except as opponents, and working by warfare and the balance of power, he conceived the idea of combined councils, representing both sides, meeting periodically to consider the well-being of the industry. Such bodies were not to deal with disputes, but could often avoid them and remove their causes. Above all they would provide a friendly atmosphere. He persuaded the men's organizations first, and induced them to approach the masters, who responded willingly ; and after due debates, and two years' permeation

¹ For a full account of this remarkable story see a pamphlet issued by the Garton Foundation, 36 Dean's Yard, Westminster, 1s., entitled *The Industrial Council for the Building Industry*.

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of opinion in all the bodies concerned, the Builders' Parliament was constituted. At its sixth quarterly meeting in August, 1919, it passed by an overwhelming majority a report, called the Foster Report, under which masters would become paid officials and capitalists would receive a fixed interest. Mr. Sparkes and the builders, therefore, are using their united organization to prepare the way for the Guild arrangement, and are favourable to it. They have offered the labour to build some thousands of houses to the Corporation of Manchester, if the latter will supply the capital and take the business risk. But the Whitley Council movement has had a wider development, if a less advanced one.

Mr. J. H. Whitley, Chairman of Committees in the House of Commons, and Chairman of a Government Sub-Committee on the relations of employers and employed, read an article by Mr. Sparkes on his scheme in the *Venturer* for December, 1916, and asked him to prepare a memorandum for him in detail, and to record his progress to date. This memorandum became the basis of the Whitley Report. The Government adopted it and organized under it the Whitley Councils. The day after

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Mr. Sparkes's memorandum reached the printers the author was sent to prison as a conscientious objector to military service. He was a Quaker; he had refused an exemption as a works manager in a controlled business ; he had resigned his directorship rather than do war work ; and now in defiance of an Act of Parliament which granted exemption, the blind hand of the Tribunals and the War Office could do nothing better with this young patriot than to keep him in gaol for two years. He was liberated a little before the others because the King happened to ask for the author of the Whitley Report. This kind of thing gives pause to one's hopes of better times coming out of the action of the present militarist states. To all these proposals Ruskin ought to be recognized as the idealist forerunner. His guilds of craftsmen, though differently founded, are very much like Mr. Cole's. The same social message which Oxford sent through Ruskin from Christ Church and Corpus, she now sends through a Fellow of Magdalen. As the consummation of the idealist approaches, it becomes necessary to work the ideas out, and people will listen to the details, indeed will fiercely question them, and demand something practical. But in the history of economic thought, should these ideas

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become ultimately fruitful, a greater place should be found for the author of *Fors* than has yet been awarded to him by our writers on Economics. The chief differences between the modern scheme and that of forty years ago is that Ruskin would confiscate nothing, and would not demand, would even object to, a labour monopoly in the hands of the Guilds, which Mr. Cole declares to be a necessity, without which a Guild is not a Guild. It will be for our successors fifty years hence to say on which side wisdom lay.

On one point the age has gone beyond Ruskin. For good or evil we know we have nothing to trust to but Democracy. From the ugliness and gullibility of the democracy the secluded artist shrank, living in beauty and luxury at Oxford or Venice or by the Lake of Coniston. There was excuse, and there is still much excuse, for men of little faith. The democracy can be played upon and excited to war : its ruling puppets dare not take the drink from it even in war time. It has "demanded," as economists say, our conscienceless and sensational newspapers, and it loves to read them. It needs much education, and particularly it needs what Ruskin hoped for from Education—character and conduct ; first, grace and health and beauty

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of life ; and, as chief intellectual prize, a relentless love of truth. Would that everybody would refuse to buy again a paper that had once deceived them, or to vote for a politician once proved untrustworthy.

Reformers, forgetting the dead weight they have to shift, turn their guns on one another. Socialists seem to be most scornful of Liberalism, and particularly of those employers who are generous and public-spirited.

It must be emphasized that Ruskin was an aristocrat in temperament. In fact he repudiated the idea of an equality which did not, he declared, exist. His sections in *Munera Pulveris* against equal voting and on "natural slavery"—I suppose learnt from Aristotle's *Politics*—are clear on this.¹ He did not support negro slavery, but his interests were chiefly taken up with opposing economic slavery at home, or reserving it for the fit people. The whole passage must be read to be understood.

It is now in 1920 nearly fifty years since *Fors Clavigera* began to come out, and the outlines of St. George's Guild were drawn. Those who in that decade found a new inspiration and

¹ § 129-133, and also *Time and Tide*, § 105 ; *Crown of Wild Olive*, § 119 ; *Cestus of Aglaia*, § 55.

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delight in discipleship to him, are now growing elderly ; the glory of the early time when Ruskin's genius was irradiating the pages of *Fors* with the hope of a kingdom of God to be raised within the kingdom of this world, was in the days of youth, in the spring of aspiration and a not easily bounded hope. We nourished our hearts on godlike food ; and we owe our Master an inextinguishable debt. It is often doubtless a thought full of sadness that the tender grace of a day that is dead will never come back to us, in the sober light of long experience in the realm of the commonplace. Our task now is, to gather up in our maturity that which abides ; for our days are passing, and though the growth of the kingdom has not been all that we might have hoped, its spirit must still be handed on, and fixed, so far as we can fix it, in the permanent habits of man.

We Ruskinians are often called sentimental. But it is not sentimental to keep sentiment in its proper place and to have a sane and well directed emotion at our beck when something has to be done. "Sentiment" means ill-directed emotion which slops over. Loyalty is not inconsistent with criticism. It is essential that that which is merely temporary or fanciful in the

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instructions which run through the pages of *Fors* should not be insisted upon for ever. Those pages contain many quaint directions untested by experience.

The Guild of St. George was intended to be a company of people who would bind themselves to live in a healthy way, doing harm to no man and no landscape, cultivating land by hand or water power, and contributing to the public and educational work of the Guild, at first, one-tenth of their income ; but as this was too much for most people, the amount was left elastic.¹

The Creed of St. George is a noble document. It had to be signed by every member of the Guild.²

1. I trust in the Living God, Father Almighty, Maker of heaven and earth, and of all things and creatures, visible and invisible.

I trust in the kindness of His Law and the goodness of His work.

2. I trust in the nobleness of human nature, in the majesty of its faculties, the fulness of its mercy, and the joy of its love.

¹ See *Fors*, vol. viii. p. 231.

² *Fors*, Letter LVIII, vol. v. p. 273.

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I will strive to love my neighbour as myself, and even when I cannot, will act as if I did.

3. I will labour, with such strength and opportunity as God gives me, for my own daily bread : and all that my hand finds to do, I will do with my might.

4. I will not deceive, nor cause to be deceived, any human being for my gain or pleasure ; nor hurt, nor cause to be hurt, any human being for my gain or pleasure : nor rob, nor cause to be robbed, any human being for my gain or pleasure.

5. I will not kill or hurt any living creature needlessly, nor destroy any beautiful thing, but will strive to save and comfort all gentle life, and guard and perfect all natural beauty upon the earth.

6. I will strive to raise my own body and soul daily into higher powers of duty and happiness ; not in rivalry or contention with others, but for the help, delight and honour of others, and for the joy and peace of my own life.

7. (On loyalty to the laws.)

8. (On loyalty to the Guild.)

As an organization this little realm within the realm came to very little. It needed advertisement, propagandism, somebody to preach it, and to organize it. The prophet at Brantwood

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wrote about it to the then very limited audience of *Fors*, and there propaganda ended. There were about forty-two Companions of St. George altogether at one time ; and the Master was autocratic and irregular through ill health. Some land at Abbeydale, Sheffield, was taken, and a settlement of Socialists attempted without success. George Baker presented a woodland tract of fifteen acres at Bewdley ; Mrs. Talbot some cliff-like land and cottages at Barmouth ; and a small holding on the Yorkshire coast at Claughton, near Whitby, was acquired. The land cultivation came to very little.

The land at Abbeydale is now a successful market garden with a residence, let to a tenant in the usual way. A house has been built within recent years on the land at Bewdley, and part, if not all, of it is at last in cultivation by a Liverpool couple tired of town life. Mrs. Talbot's representative manages the cottages at Barmouth on the lines of an ordinary good landlord. We have sold the bit of Yorkshire moorland, long troublesome. After delays and legal difficulties, George Baker, a Quaker alderman of Birmingham, who had been co-trustee of the properties, and had borne much of the business burden of it from the beginning, was

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made Master, and a few new members were enrolled by invitation. The Guild has held of late years a number of annual meetings, at Oxford, Coniston, Sheffield, Bewdley, London, Manchester, Liverpool and Birmingham, which were delightful social occasions, and which transacted the business of the properties, and made grants from the income, which, apart from subscriptions, is between one and two hundred pounds a year, mostly representing Ruskin's own gifts. The grants go as a rule to literary, agricultural or other purposes on the Master's lines. On the death of Mr. Baker the Mastership was accepted by Mr. George Thomson, of Huddersfield, the forerunner, under Ruskin's guidance, of the profit-sharing movement in this country. He resigned, through failing health, in 1920, and Mr. H. E. Luxmoor, of Eton, was appointed. Mr. William Wardle, of 4 Olive Lane, Wavertree, Liverpool, is the Hon. Sec. Two members represent the Guild on the Committee of the Sheffield Corporation which has charge of the Ruskin Museum in Meersbrook Park. This Museum is the property of the Guild on permanent loan to the Corporation of Sheffield who maintain it. It is indeed among the Guild properties the one really valuable concrete survival of

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the labour and enthusiasm of the founder. It is one of the very lovely things of the whole world, with its concentrated charm and delicate fineness.

These details about the present day of small things, about this remnant of an ancient hope, are not themselves important, but may not be without interest to some of the many thousand readers of *Fors Clavigera*. Those letters are full more of promise and of postponement than of achievement or permanently established method ; and the rather wilful and fantastic adventures of a mind that was seldom at rest, often overflow into the monthly budget without as much repression as a sober systematizer would have exercised, but with endless delight.

In the early hopeful days, when there floated before Ruskin's imagination the conception of an influential and numerous body of Companions of the Guild, comprising the moral and intellectual aristocracy of the country, he laid his plans on large lines. In the Master's Report for 1881 he wrote that he expected " the Guild to extend its operations over the Continent of Europe and number its members ultimately by myriads " ; which in the mouth of a Greek scholar means accurately by tens of thousands. He instructed the Companions to read no newspapers until

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he should be able to found a newspaper fit for them to read, an instruction which his most devout follower has never obeyed. Moreover there was to be an authorized list of books which alone might be read, of which *Bibliotheca Pastorum* was the first part. This is perhaps the most erratic of all the proposals which crossed his mind.

He also criticized the coinage of the country, and insisted that there should be under the rule of St. George sovereigns called ducats, of pure gold, a metal which is of itself quite unsuited for use as coinage, and needs to be hardened by alloy before it is fit for the purposes of the mint. Then the shilling was to be called a florin and was to be divided into ten pence. This copying of the coins of Florence in the middle ages, which as Ruskin once said to me, gave her merchants credit in the time of Edward I, cannot be considered seriously ; indeed, these fanciful commands can only be matter for regret. There can be but one coinage in a country, even if the Guild of St. George had become a large institution. So late as 1884 Mr. Ruskin told a party of us at Brantwood that the St. George's Company was going to issue coins of pure gold.

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Rents, payable of course to the State, were to be one-tenth of the produce. Now rents cannot with any justice be settled that way. The farmer who farms poor land should be as well off and get as good a return for his labour as he who farms rich land. Under ordinary competition things turn out that way. All farmers in theory, and approximately in practice, receive the same return for labour and capital applied to land, and the margin goes to the landlord as rent.

Ruskin's system is known as the metayer system, only that half, not one-tenth of, the profits usually go to the landlord. It is an old-fashioned, primitive, and uneconomic system, and is used in Italy, Portugal, on the Danube, in Russia, and over about one-seventh of France. At the time of the French Revolution, Arthur Young found seven-eighths of France managed in this way. It is suited for small holdings ; but it discourages intensive culture, for it would be no use for a metayer tenant to spend £1 in increasing his product by £2, if half of the £2 went to the landlord. Ruskin liked it because it made a friendly co-operation between landlord and tenant. There was never any clash of interests, and the tenant was never under

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real hardship. It is morally a much more attractive plan. It bars any keen competition between tenants and it leads to permanency of tenure.

Throughout Ruskin's proposals for reform we shall nearly always find in each something fanciful and dainty, but impracticable—a sort of pretty decoration tacked on in gaiety of heart, in the spirit of Gothic ornamentation. But if we knock off his little pinnacles, and deny ourselves the glow of his stained glass windows, we shall generally find a commodious and serviceable erection of constructive reform left. In fact, he turns out to have been on the main stream of progress, though pleading all the time that he was harking back to a happier past. His agricultural and business proposals contained fruitful elements, appearing ahead of their time ; events from many sides have proved how illuminating his suggestions were.

Ruskin, as we have noted, would limit all incomes at the top by slicing off the superfluity and giving a title instead. In occult ways, unfortunately, peerages and baronetcies and knighthoods do come about by the sacrifice of cash ; and in more open and creditable form the graduated income tax, the super-tax, and the

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steeply rising death duties are partial measures in the same direction.

There is perhaps nothing more fanciful in Ruskin's reconstruction of Society than his marriage regulations, laid down in *Time and Tide*, and mentioned in the last chapter. We have not yet put Cupid into harness to this extent, but the popular interest and concern about the propagation of the unfit and the feeble-minded, and in general the attention which is being paid to heredity and the interest in eugenics, are all in the direction laid down by Ruskin in a thorough-going shape, fearless as the schemes of childhood. By feeding school children and by doctoring them the State supplements the weakness of the homes. In many unfamiliar forms the work of St. George goes on.

But in his day thought and practice in Social Reform were comparatively uninstructed by experience. One is reminded of his own phrase about Cimabue and Giotto. They uttered "the burning messages of prophecy by the stammering lips of infants." He goes straight for his object without fear or hesitation, as an inexperienced child will toddle across a crowded street, unfeared because unknowing about the motor

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cars. Ruskin, for instance, would set the unemployed to reclaim waste lands. To which of us has not that thought come? Here are the men wanting work; here is the land wanting workers. Let us put them together. But experience has shown that the dour nature of the unoccupied land, and the frequently dour nature of the unoccupied men, render such schemes generally hopeless, and at times even scandalous, failures. Land and men are unoccupied because they are hard to occupy, and by putting together waste land and waste men you only double the difficulty of the task. When good workers might make something of bad land, or bad workers of good land, bad workers on bad land are hopeless. Some years ago in the House of Commons in the debate on the Right to Work Bill, Mr. Burns explained amid general agreement the complete failure of relief works, and their tendency rather to increase the evil and waste public resources. Why is the land out of cultivation? For no other reason than that it does not pay to cultivate it. The return will not give a maintenance and pay taxes. We may leave rent out, for landlords would rather have their lands cultivated for no rent than let them lie a waste of weeds. And why are the men not at work?

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Because in normal times about 40 per cent. of them are unemployable, the degenerates who are such a cause for alarm and concern to the nation. Of the rest, most are unsuited to agricultural work, and only a moderate proportion can be helped in that way. That some tolerable land can be so cultivated, and some industrious unemployed so maintained is true, but it requires the spiritual amalgam of the Salvation Army, or some such body of patient and capable enthusiasts, to solve the difficult problem, for a selected minority of the submerged, on their farm colonies. They are doing the work of St. George.

Above these stricken ones comes the ordinary farm labourer, who is unfortunately migrating to the towns. Him Mr. Ruskin hoped to settle on land. Such a scheme of small holdings, if backed by sufficient capital, worked by experts, and favourably situated for a market, might even in the seventies have succeeded. Of course it would not have had about it all the moral excellences, the grace of character and the charm of nature and art, which delight us so in the St. George's lands of the future which we read about in *Fors*. However, Ruskin never concentrated upon it, but spent most of his

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time and of the resources of the Guild on the Sheffield Museum instead. He did what he found he could do the best. He knew he was leaving great gaps for others to fill up. He says, touchingly, in the Preface to *Love's Meinie* in 1881: "It has been, throughout, my trust that if Death should write on these plans of mine 'What this man began to build he was not able to finish,' God may also write on them, not in anger, but in aid, 'A stronger than he cometh.'"

But with labour and patience and against strong hostile political forces, the Small Holdings Act has been for some years at work. The obstruction of the squires still renders it useless in many counties, and there can be no more true task for St. George than to support agencies such as the Small Holdings Association. By its means, as a matter of fact, the peasantry is being restored to the land on a proper business basis. Tasks of this magnitude require organization on a large scale, and the payment of proper returns. No social benefit is given by letting some individual hold land at less than its value. The County Councils since the war are engaged upon it. We are now again on the eve of a large settlement of returned soldiers on the

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land, and of an attempt to brighten the villages.

St. George, again, ordered that the homes of workpeople should be cheerful, that they should have gardens and flowers and sunshine, that the long miserable rows of uniform cottages should be of the past. These things, largely under the inspiration of Ruskin, are being done, in First Garden City at Letchworth, and in such model villages as Bournville, New Earswick, Port Sunlight, the Hampstead suburb, and similar suburbs at Manchester and Hull. But it is all on far too small a scale. The true task of St. George to-day is to strengthen these progressive movements. The growth of the towns since 1871 has made this urban problem the most urgent of all. How many rows of dreadful box homes have been built. The country is being choked by the spreading towns. Purely agricultural colonies are good, but towns cannot be founded without the help of the manufacturers who make a town.

Again, the intention of St. George was to have a happy body of workpeople, loyally co-operating with a superior type of employer, and banishing greedy competition. The surviving remnant of the Guild of St. George has very little in its

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own power in this way, but amongst the employers who have built these model villages there exists just this kind of relation in manifold ways. And again, it pays. When in the British Association at York the firm of Rowntree and Co. was being commended for the benefits they are giving their workpeople, Mr. Seebohm Rowntree, whose whole heart is in the work, made a speech insisting that it paid them. He did this in order to induce other people to do the same, and to show that it was feasible for the ordinary manufacturer.

Broadly speaking, we may say that what we are all striving for is being done, in ways more wholesale and more complicated than could have been worked out in the seventies. Two generations of social pioneers, thinkers, and experimenters, have been grappling with the problems since then, so that we should not expect precisely the same prescription to be given by the social physician to-day as was given by one of the great pioneers of healing nearly fifty years ago.

The agricultural settlement seems the furthest from practical politics. Nevertheless, a series of enactments since 1881 have established in Ireland that very arrangement of a peasant

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proprietary paying a fixed rent to the State, which is the essence of Ruskin's proposal ; except that the Irish rents under the Land Purchase Acts are terminable after a period of years ; and so rather more easy than Ruskin's. Presumably, if found successful, the system could be extended. It will certainly occupy the minds of reformers very much during the immediately coming years.

Education was naturally a chief concern with St. George, and it occupies Letter XVI of *Time and Tide*.¹ His schools were to be in the fresh air of the country, and with large playing fields securely their own. "The Laws of Health and exercises enjoined by them" are the first feature of the curriculum ; and riding, running, all the honest personal exercises of offence and defence, and music, are to be included under this head. Then come "the mental graces of reverence and compassion, which are to be developed by deliberate and constant exercise,"—which means, doubtless, that there is to be no girding at passers-by in the streets, and no rat-catching for amusement. Then, as the bond and guardian of reverence and compassion, comes "the truth

¹ Cf. the Preface to *Unto This Last*, referred to in chap. v. above.

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of spirit and word, of thought and sight—truth earnest and compassionate, sought for like a treasure, and kept like a crown.” This is to be taught chiefly “by pressing for close accuracy of statement, as a principle of honour and as an accomplishment of language.” There is much sound advice about this in Letter XVI. Then, for the actual curriculum, there come, first, history ; and then natural science and mathematics. But there are to be three alternative curricula, one for city children, one for country children, and one for seafaring children. The city children are to study mathematics and the arts, country children, natural history and agriculture, and the future sailors, astronomy, geography, and marine natural history. A beginning of variety of just this kind now exists in the elementary schools, as noted in the last chapter.

After this, all children are to be taught the calling whereby they are to live.

The curious whimsical paradox that reading and writing are to be optional subjects, does not, after such a curriculum, amount to much. It is part of a petulant reaction against merely inferior literary exercise, by a chief craftsman in it ; as a professor of music is the first to tell you

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that it is no use teaching music to those who will do no good with it. Ruskin says that the teaching of the three R's is of no use to people who will only read rubbish and write falsehood, and, put that way, one is bound to agree.

No school of St. George has ever been begun, though there are schools which have kindred aims. Such schools are away in the country with farm and garden, with little pressure of outside examinations, a varied curriculum, great attention to athletic exercise, to natural science and history, with classics and the study of grammar practically shelved, and the prime concern of the school management the inculcation of reverence and truthfulness and gentleness. The Natural History, the Arts and Handicrafts, the reading aloud and the committing scripture and poetry to memory would be after his own heart.

We recognize in this luminous and suggestive treatment of education that the right note is struck—the basal idea is that “you have not educated a boy when you have taught him to know what he did not know, but to be what he had not been, and to behave as he had not behaved.” And, with the present stiff system and starved appliances, human and material,

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with which we educate the citizens of the future, what a glorious vision Ruskin's is, of what that education might so easily be. His protest against the three R's is merely a humorous outcry against their insufficiency, their mechanical character, and their commercial end. How that much, and that much only, of mental outfit has worked, is printed large in the circulation of *Illustrated Bits, Scraps*, all sensational evening papers and the Bottomley, Harmsworth and Hulton presses. But clerks and pupil teachers are cheap.

Ruskin's actual work as a University Professor was notable ; and many are the men, now old or gone, whom he influenced at Oxford. To be one of the influences at Oxford or Cambridge is a worthy use of gifts of the highest kind. The present Drawing Schools at Oxford are a monument of his labour and his liberality.

It is easy indeed for the Philistine to laugh at the pageantry of the vision of the England of St. George. There were to be "Marshals" with great districts subject to them, "Landlords," men of fortune devoting their gifts to the service of the Guild, and owing their lordship to the fact that "they could work as much better than their labourers, as a good knight than his soldiers

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These were all to be called *Comites Ministrantes* ; under them the *Comites Militantes* were the rank and file of the workers on the Company's lands. Finally the *Comites Consilii*, the only class who have materialized, were the companions contributing, but not residing on St. George's lands.¹

To sum up, then, the present public duty of a good Ruskinian :

He will support the labour colonies of the Salvation Army and Small Holdings Associations. He will invest in the stock of Garden City or other Garden Suburbs; he will work for the Minority Report on the Poor Law, and for all plans for strengthening and humanizing Education, for Town Planning and Smoke Abatement. He will labour to extend among the laity the duties of the clergy, and among the clergy the spirit of the layman, he will help all Peace Societies, and labour to promote good understanding with other countries through the League of Nations. He will clip the wings of capital seeking to use the British Flag as a business asset, and he will do this by a capital levy, the super-tax and the Death Duties. He will be a mild and reasonable

¹ See *Fors*, Letters LVIII and LXIII.

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Socialist, so far as to extend the scope of municipal action as it may be found practicable. He would support the principle of a minimum wage, co-operative partnerships, and collective bargaining ; and he would probably give cautiously some power to segregate the feeble-minded. He would provide Art Galleries and Museums housed in noble buildings, and would religiously preserve the surviving beauty of the country side. Two possible changes may be treated at greater length.

I. The higher professional activities may be still further removed from competition and put under salaried service. There will be competition for posts ; that is right ; but if medical men and lawyers did not depend upon fees, we should be rid of many abuses ; and the work would gain in dignity. I believe clergymen, professors and public schoolmasters do as good work as those who follow callings more directly dependent on the casual payments and goodwill of customers. With regard to education, there would be danger of loss as well as of gain, if private schools and private tutors were abolished. They should remain available for those who desire them. There will always be people who demand a special religious atmosphere or who

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wish to make experiments. And there will be pupils who from bad health, or neglect of early training, could not properly benefit from the schools of the State. It is not necessary that the public body in control should be either the State or the Municipality. In my view, neither the universities nor the public schools would benefit by such a change. Nevertheless, it is becoming increasingly agreed that the nation should shoulder a larger part of the expense, and guarantee the quality of the teaching, more widely and liberally than it does at present. In this connection it is all the more necessary that the State should clear itself of militarism. For if military training were to become compulsory in schools, as is seriously threatened, the nation would be once more as acutely divided about it, as it has been, so long and so disastrously, over denominational schools. We should have conscientious objectors in permanence.

Nor can we proscribe the private practitioner, for the wealthy, if there were any, or for the medically heterodox. Yet, how much bad pretentious work, how much humbug and servility, would be spared to their profession if most of them became public officials, only doctors know.

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I am not qualified to say whether the legal profession should be nationalized, nor how much. But things could hardly be in worse case than they are at present, when the worthy members of a necessary profession are regarded by many as little better than birds of prey.

It may be said that modest State salaries would not attract able men into the professions so organized. But if the profits of trade were socialized as proposed, or divided among guild members, there would not be that golden alternative lure.

II. In those matters which are left to the adjustment of free competition, it is necessary that everyone should be in a fair position to bargain, so that there may be no compulsion due to sheer starvation. This requires to be done so carefully that an actual maintenance at a tolerable standard, and permanently available without work, should not be offered to the able-bodied. Two suggestions have been made which are well worth considering.

Alfred Russel Wallace proposes that a daily dole of bread, enough to sustain life, should be easily available to the indigent or the out of work. Tickets should be accessible at all Post Offices, Police Stations, and from magis-

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trates, clergymen and others, on making out a claim of need. Thus actual starvation would be warded off.¹

A more elaborate proposal is that to whose advocacy my friend Mr. Dennis Milner and his wife are devoting their lives. He proposes that everyone, rich and poor, from birth to death, should be the recipient of a certain pension, to be provided by a four shillings in the pound Income Tax, on all incomes great and small, to be deducted at the source. Thus, one-fifth of everyone's income would be redistributed on a flat rate, as a capitation grant. It would provide on pre-war incomes about four shillings and threepence per week per head. So that a family of five, receiving twenty-one shillings and threepence a week, or £55 a year, would also pay £55 Income Tax, if their other income was £220. They would neither lose nor gain. Every family of that size receiving a smaller income would gain by the scheme; everyone above that limit would lose. It would thus encourage marriage and the raising of families, by constituting a tax on the unmarried. The man of a thousand a year, with a wife and three children, would pay £200 and receive £55—

¹ *The Wonderful Century*, chap. xx.

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reducing his income to £855. One great advantage to the poor would be that it would save them from most or all of the insurance premiums they pay, of all sorts. The scheme is attractively expounded in pamphlets.¹

Clearly its greatest difficulty is due to the fact that we are likely to have so great an Income Tax to pay for war, that to pay also for welfare may be beyond the willingness of the public.

¹ *A Reasonable Revolution*, by Bertram Pickard (George Allen & Unwin, Ltd.).

CHAPTER VII

USURY

RUSKIN'S attack upon the taking of interest for capital is the part of his doctrine which goes deepest into our business system. It has in consequence weakened his influence, and has not, even by himself, been put into practice in this country. But he spent much of his strength upon it in his later years. In *Munera Pulveris*, written in 1862, we find him stating¹ that Usury is "merely taking an exorbitant sum for the use of anything"—"the essence of the usury being that it is obtained by advantage of opportunity or necessity, and not as due reward for labour," and he therefore includes high profits for middlemen under the term: but in later editions he adds a footnote to say that Mr. W. C. Sillar² has since shown him that the payment of any interest at all is unjustifiable, and is real usury.

¹ P. 115.

² In pamphlets enumerated in Libr. ed. vol. xvii. p. 220, n.

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It is well to distinguish carefully between Interest and Profits. The business man who exploits foreign concessions, and who stimulates wars, may or may not be a capitalist. He may be using other people's capital. He makes his profit as reward for his work, his luck, his enterprise, and an often risky responsibility. The capitalist, properly so called, is, on the other hand, an investor who simply takes his interest. Often, doubtless, one man fills both parts, but in general theoretical discussion they should be kept separate.

Interest, even if unavoidable, tends to increase the inequalities of distribution, and beyond a certain point it becomes a social danger, and may even become a disease in the body politic. It is one of the least desirable consequences of the system of private property ; but it is, I fear, an inherent part of it—to be got rid of only under a communal system where private property does not exist.

His new convictions did not take an absorbing hold on Ruskin's mind for some years. In September, 1872, he writes in *Fors*, Letter XXI, §§ 18, 19, in reply to a remonstrance from Mr. Sillar: "I am very careless about such minor matters as the present conditions of . . .

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banking. I hold bank stock simply because I suppose it to be safer than any other stock, and I take the interest of it because, though taking interest is, in the abstract, as wrong as war, the entire fabric of society is at present so connected with both usury and war, that it is not possible violently to withdraw, nor wisely to set example of withdrawing, from either evil."

"Denunciations of interest are much beside the mark unless they are accompanied with some explanation of the manner in which borrowing and lending, when necessary, can be carried on without it." There is a passage to the same effect in the notes to *Fors*, Letter XLIII, written in July, 1874.

It is easy to show why interest is both just and unavoidable, if we accept the justice of private property in general. By advancing capital we enable the borrower to carry on profitable operations which will pay him after he has given us somewhat for the advance. It pays him to borrow. He obtains an immediate order upon labour from the lender who postpones using it for his own pleasure. It is this element of Time which constitutes the whole reason for interest. Ready money, that is an immediate order upon labour for which nothing has yet been given, has a

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price depending upon the action of those who have it and those who want it, under the same law of Supply and Demand as governs the price of other commodities. The current rate of interest, after taking off the varying payment for risk, represents both the reward for which the capitalists will save the last portion of fluid capital which is saved, and the "final" utility of the last dose of money available to borrowers. The capitalist needs an investment as much as the borrower needs capital. The advantage is not all on one side. Bankers desire eagerly to grant overdrafts to safe people. The whole process is essential to production on a large scale, and to public activity, and there is not necessarily any oppression in it, in our present state of society, though it is, like everything else, liable to abuse.

But to a man who has enough already "abstinence" is no hardship. Time is his friend. Hence a measure of government interference to stop great fortunes is just and necessary, whether by a heavy income tax or a capital levy, or by death duties, all steeply graduated. Another drastic extension of these duties would be found in the limitation of the right of bequest, fixing a maximum amount which a man may

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receive, or may leave, by inheritance or bequest. Bequest is not a natural, it is a strictly legal, right ; and the law may regulate it.¹ This would check the worst of the evil of vast fortunes, which are a curse to their owners, and the other side of the poverty shield. They are rarely made in one generation. Bacon says : “ Usury bringeth the treasure of a realm into few hands ; for the usurer trading on a certainty, and other men on uncertainties, at the end of the game all the money will be in the box.”

We will now put Ruskin’s argument, from the one place where he wrote it out at length. It is the well-known passage on “ the position of William ” in the first letter of *Fors*, January, 1871.

The following is there quoted from Mrs. Fawcett’s *Political Economy for Beginners*. She translated it from the French of Bastiat:

There was once in a village a poor carpenter, who worked hard from morning to night. One day James thought to himself, “ With my hatchet, saw, and hammer, I can only make coarse furniture, and can only get the pay for such. If I had a plane, I should please my customers more, and they would pay me more. Yes, I am resolved, I will make myself a plane.” At the end of ten days James had in his possession an admirable plane, which he valued all the more for having

¹ See *The Ethics of Usury and Interest*, by Rev. W. Blissard (George Allen & Unwin), 2s. 6d. net.

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made it himself. Whilst he was reckoning all the profits which he expected to derive from the use of it, he was interrupted by William, a carpenter in the neighbouring village. William, having admired the plane, was struck with the advantages which might be gained from it. He said to James :

“ You must do me a service ; lend me the plane for a year.” As might be expected, James cried out, “ How can you think of such a thing, William ? Well, if I do this service, what will you do for me in return ? ”

W. “ Nothing. Don’t you know that a loan ought to be gratuitous ? ”

J. “ I know nothing of the sort ; but I do know that if I were to lend you my plane for a year, it would be giving it to you. To tell the truth, that was not what I made it for.”

W. “ Very well, then ; I ask you to do me a service ; what service do you ask me in return ? ”

J. “ First, then, in a year the plane will be done for. You must therefore give me another exactly like it.”

W. “ That is perfectly just. I submit to these conditions. I think you must be satisfied with this, and can require nothing further.”

J. “ I think otherwise. I made the plane for myself, and not for you. I expected to gain some advantage from it. I have made the plane for the purpose of improving my work and my condition ; if you merely return it to me in a year, it is you who will gain the profit of it during the whole of that time. I am not bound to do you such a service without receiving anything in return. Therefore, if you wish for my plane, besides the restoration already bargained for, you must give me a new plank as a compensation for the advantages of which I shall be deprived.”

These terms were agreed to ; but the singular part of it is that at the end of the year, when the plane came into James’s possession, he lent it again ; recovered it, and lent it a third and fourth time. It has passed into the hands of his son, who still lends it. Let us examine this little story. The plane is the symbol of all capital, and the plank is the symbol of all interest.

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Thus far Bastiat: Ruskin comments :—

“ If this be an abridgment, what a graceful piece of highly wrought literature the original story must be ! I take the liberty of abridging it a little more.

“ James makes a plane, lends it to William on 1st January for a year. William gives him a plank for the loan of it, wears it out, and makes another for James which he gives him on 31st December. On 1st January he again borrows the new one ; and the arrangement is repeated continuously. The position of William therefore is, that he makes a plane every 31st December, lends it to James till the next day, and pays James a plank annually for the privilege of lending it to him on that evening. This, in future investigations of capital and interest, we will call, if you please, ‘ the Position of William.’

“ You may not at the first glance see where the fallacy lies : (the writer of the story evidently counts on your not seeing it at all).

“ If James did not lend the plane to William, he could only get his gain of a plank by working with it himself, and wearing it out himself. When he had worn it out at the end of the year, he would, therefore, have to make another for himself. William, working with it instead, gets

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the advantage instead, which he must, therefore, pay James his plank for ; and return to James what James would, if he had not lent his plane, then have had—not a new plane, but the worn-out one. James must make a new one for himself, as he would have had to do if no William had existed ; and if William likes to borrow it again for another plank, all is fair.

“That is to say, clearing the story of its nonsense, that James makes a plane annually, and sells it to William for its proper price, which, in kind, is a new plane. But this arrangement has nothing whatever to do with principal or with interest.”

I fear Ruskin is wrong. He forgets a sinking fund for depreciation. His error lies in supposing that a plane can be used for a year, and worn out, for no return but a plank. If planes only last a year and are of advantage, their value in use is equal to that of the cost of a plane plus a plank, plus some more. That is, the cost of making a plane is less by a plank and more than the benefit a workman can get out of it before it is worn out, after paying for his labour. The benefit in a year to the user is more than plane plus plank, or William would not go on. That

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is the point of the service of all capital, intelligently used.

William has to pay his tax of a plank per annum because he is not beforehand with his needs. He gets the advantage of the plane every year twelve months before he can afford to make it ; and the advantage of being in advance of his needs goes to James. The element of Time is everything. A plane at the beginning of a year is of more service than a plane you have to wait for till the end. Ruskin begins his sequence of time on December 31st of the first year, avoiding the whole point. And the position of William is therefore not unfair ; though it is one to be avoided.

There is little to be added of the nature of argument ; though *Fors* is scattered over with allusions to the subject, and discussions with many correspondents are printed in full.¹

These, and many other shorter passages,² consist largely of intuitive prophetic assertion

¹ The numbers which are devoted to lengthy treatment of Usury are: Letters I, XVIII, p. 17, XXI, pp. 15-18, XLIII, pp. 153-7, LIII, 142-5, LXVIII, 245-53, LXX, 312-33, LXXVIII and LXXX, and *Arrows of the Chace*, ii. 103. There is also a long discussion on the subject with Bishop Fraser of Manchester in *On the Old Road*, vol. ii. pp. 202-245, reprinted from the *Contemporary Review*.

² See list in Libr. edn. vol. xxvii. Introd. p. xlvii.

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of the sinfulness of interest, even the slightest. Much space is occupied by criticisms of the author's own practice in living on the proceeds of Bank Stock, and his very cogent replies thereto. They amount to an admission that the doctrine does not fit the present time. There are impressive accounts also of the miseries of usury-ridden countries like India, and of the folly of borrowed capital. But there is no light thrown on how business is to be conducted without it : there is nothing immediately practical.

The array of authority against usance for money is weighty and of ancient date.

Lev. xxv. 35-37 : "And if thy brother be poor and powerless with his hands at thy side, thou shalt take his part upon thee, to help him, as thy proselyte and thy neighbour ; and thy brother shall live with thee. Thou shalt take no usury of him, nor anything over and above, and thou shalt fear thy God. I am the Lord, and thy brother shall live with thee. Thou shalt not give him thy money for usury ; and thou shalt not give him thy food for increase." (J. R. translated from LXX.) Exodus xxii. 25 and Deuteronomy xxiii. 19 are similar in purport. Psalm xv. refers to the man "who putteth not out his money to usury, nor taketh

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reward against the innocent"; as being a fit person to abide in the Lord's tabernacle, and dwell in His holy hill. Here we have the taking of interest running parallel with the corruption of the high trust of the judicial bench. Ezekiel xviii. 8, 13, 17 is contemporary with Leviticus, and is practically the same voice, representing Jewish opinion on the resettlement of the State after the Captivity. Here usury is classed with every abominable wickedness.

In these Jewish passages it was the taking of interest from a brother Hebrew that was forbidden. This limitation to the profitable use of capital may have early led the Jew capitalist to the permitted Gentile outlet; and have caused him, in lending to the outside world, to carry with the act a spice of uncharitableness and conscious ill-will. These passages are a testimony to the extraordinary cohesiveness and patriotic consciousness of the restored nation. Such a proviso of itself is both cause and consequence; it leads to further isolation from others.

In the parable of the Talents, the king who was made to say, "Thou knewest that I was an hard man," is also made to say, "Thou shouldest have given my money to the bankers that at my coming I should have received mine own with

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usury." But I dare not deduce anything from this. The Parables never apply all round ; they only teach one lesson at a time. He who taught the duty of prayer by means of the Parable of the unjust judge, and the duty of using present opportunity by the Parable of the unjust steward, might easily teach the duty of the use of the gifts of God, without implying that God was either a "hard man" or a usurer. All these stories may have been accompanied by some such addition as this, that if even with unjust and hard men this teaching holds, will it not be far more worth while to pray to God and to faithfully use His opportunities and His gifts ?

There is, however, one passage, not in the four Gospels, but well based on tradition:—"Be honourable bankers"; and it certainly does seem strange, if the whole business of money-dealing were wrong, that that illustration of the use of spiritual capital should have been selected. The fact that usury was denounced by the Early Church may have led to the non-inclusion of this dubious text in the Canon.

Denunciations of usury are commonplaces among the Fathers of the Church. It was wholly forbidden to the clergy and sometimes to the laity. Many have been the sermons, of the fiercest

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character, delivered against it by the Bishops of the Catholic and Anglican Churches. John Wesley told his followers "to die sooner than put anything in pawn or borrow or lend on usury." His rule on the subject was, however, explained later on by himself as being against "unlawful interest"; upon which Ruskin remarks: "Doubtless his disciples know what rate of interest is lawful, and what not; and also by what law it was made so; and always pause with pious accuracy at the decimal point whereat the excellence of an investment begins to make it criminal." Nevertheless, Wesley was right.

Turning to the Greek world we find usury condemned by Solon and Lycurgus, Plato and Aristotle ("money sterile by nature"); and a Roman voice comes from Cato. From Arabia is heard the word of Mohammed. And, of great Englishmen, we find Lord Bacon, and perhaps Shakespeare, teaching the same. Concerning these it is to be noted, that being before the days of joint company ownership, their testimony was solely against private money-lending; and the one authority, John Wesley, who lived in the early days of modern business, was not against interest as such in his later years. Nor again, did these authorities attack Rent, which Ruskin

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is consistent in also reprobating. The land-owning aristocracy, we shall remember, are to be the recipients instead of a Government annuity, as wages for their work of governing their inferiors. Amongst an agricultural, non-commercial people, the usurer is a sinister figure. This must have been the case in Palestine, and in agricultural England. To-day he is the curse of India, whose cultivators are enslaved by the money-lenders under English law. In short, we may conclude that it requires a fair field and genuine commercial habits to make interest a public benefit.

The change from the earlier to the later John Wesley is most significant. It represents the change to modern business on a large scale, which occurred during his lifetime. It is noticeable that since his time the attack on Interest has ceased, but for Ruskin, among religious teachers. As a counsel of ultimate perfection in a communist State, of course, Interest would be abolished ; but most Socialists admit that it is an essential part of the institution of private property, and must stand or fall with it.

There may yet be great revolutions in our sense of duty. We may come to extend kindness to animals to the extraordinary length of

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not eating them. That excessive toil and numbing poverty should exist around us, may some day become a reproach to us, as we feed on the roses and lie on the lilies of life, which are often provided for us by the said labourers. By the time, then, that we come to love our neighbours as ourselves, we shall probably not be anxious to take advantage of our position of being a little beforehand with the world, of having money to lend ; and may even sink the time advantage thereby at our disposal ; and not take interest. But we shall be different then ; and so will the world we live in. It is a kind of altruism which absolutely needs a fit environment. If the cessation of income from investments belongs to the Christianity which is to come, before this faith shall have been realized we shall have pooled our property into a common store, and the question of private investment will have fallen to the ground. Only among the Doukhobors has this kind of Christianity yet notably realized itself, and great is their well-being. But we must go on like Ruskin and take our Interest for the present.

The real trouble is not in the interest, but in the great fortunes. That an upper limit for wealth would be a blessing to the rich, and a

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solid gain to the nation at large, has long been my conviction. Ruskin says it is also his "long fixed conviction that one of the most important conditions of a healthful system of social economy, would be the restraint of the properties and incomes of the upper classes within certain fixed limits. The temptation to use every energy in the accumulation of wealth being thus removed, another and a higher ideal of the duties of advanced life would be necessarily created in the national mind. By withdrawal of those who had attained the prescribed limits of wealth from commercial competition, earlier worldly success, and earlier marriage, with all its beneficent moral results, would become possible to the young ; while the older men of active intellect, whose sagacity is now lost or warped in the furtherance of their own meanest interest, would be induced unselfishly to occupy themselves in the superintendence of public institutions or furtherance of public advantage. And out of this class it would be found natural and prudent always to choose the members of the legislative body of the Commons ; and to attach to the order also some peculiar honours, in the possession of which such complacency would be felt as would more than replace the unworthy satis-

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faction of being supposed richer than others, which to many men is the principal charm of their wealth. And although no law of this purport would ever be imposed on themselves by the actual upper classes, there is no hindrance to its being gradually brought into force from beneath, without any violent or impatient proceedings.”¹

As a type of Ruskin’s satirical humour in controversy we will indulge ourselves with an extract from his argument with the late Bishop of Manchester on usury. Ruskin publicly challenged Dr. Fraser to the encounter. The Bishop had somewhat sensibly remarked that religious sanctions ought not to be imposed in cases which they never originally contemplated, referring to Leviticus on usury. Ruskin replies :

“I do not know whether by the phrase, presently after used by your Lordship, ‘religious sanctions,’ I am to understand the Law of God which David loved and Christ fulfilled, or whether the splendour, the commercial prosperity, and the familiar acquaintance with all the secrets of science and treasures of art, which we admire in the City of Manchester, must in your Lordship’s view be considered as ‘cases’ which

¹ *Time and Tide*, pp. 12, 13, small ed.

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the intelligence of the Divine Lawgiver could not have originally contemplated. Without attempting to disguise the narrowness of the horizon grasped by the glance of the Lord from Sinai, nor the inconvenience of the commandments which Christ has directed those who love Him to keep, am I too troublesome or too exigent in asking from one of those whom the Holy Ghost has made our overseers, at least a distinct chart of the Old World as contemplated by the Almighty, and a clear definition of even the inappropriate tenor of the orders of Christ ; if only that the modern scientific Churchman may triumph more securely in the circumference of his heavenly vision, and accept more gratefully the glorious liberty of the free thinking children of God ? ”

CHAPTER VIII

WAR

THE fact that War is the commonest and the most pernicious way of using large masses of capital leads us naturally from Usury to War. Ruskin connects the subject with Capitalism thus :¹

“Capitalists, when they do not know what to do with their money, persuade the peasants, in various countries, that the said peasants want guns to shoot each other with. The peasants accordingly borrow guns, out of the manufacture of which the capitalists get a percentage, and men of science much amusement and credit. Then the peasants shoot a certain number of each other, until they get tired ; and burn each other’s homes down, in various places. Then they put the guns back into towers, arsenals, etc. in ornamental patterns (and the victorious party put also some ragged flags in churches). And then the capitalists tax both annually, ever

¹ Preface to *Munera Pulveris*, p. xxvi.

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afterwards, to pay interest on the loan of the guns and gunpowder."

The horrors of the Franco-German war of 1871, relatively small as they now appear, were a nightmare to him, and cloud the first volume of *Fors*, which records his current thoughts in that year.

His most prominent utterance is his lecture on "War" delivered to the students at the Engineering College at Woolwich in 1865 and printed in *The Crown of Wild Olive*. It appears, throughout, to be in praise of war. But we shall see that great deductions are to be made. Nevertheless it begins appallingly enough by stating that all fine arts have been founded in war, and can only be practised by warlike nations. He gives as instances, Egypt, Greece, and Rome. The instances are all fallacious, particularly those of the peace-loving people in the Nile Valley, and the very inartistic Romans. Nor is there any proof that war either caused or aided the artistic faculty of the Greeks. How can there be? The characteristic warrior city—Sparta—was as inartistic as Woolwich. He goes a step further to please his audience of young warrior-students by the strange assertion that "war is the foundation of all the high

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virtues and faculties of men": and that, in History, we find coupled together "peace and sensuality, peace and selfishness—peace and death." "I found that all the great nations learned their truth of word and strength of thought in war: that they were nourished in war, and wasted by peace; taught by war and deceived by peace; trained by war, and betrayed by peace; in a word that they were born in war, and expired in peace."¹

Such is the rash and partial generalization of the rhetorician, based on this much of historic truth that the early years of a nation's life have often been occupied in conflict for safety or empire, and its later, more peaceful and more prosperous years are marked sometimes by the weakening influences of wealth, and end in decay. But it is hard, indeed, impossible I venture to say, to show that the motives or the methods of war are not, from beginning to end, retrograde and barbaric, a harking back to the life of the beast; and not the source of any of these good things named.

But now comes the antidote; after such an exordium, what manner of peace address might he not give to those Woolwich men and they listen?

¹ § 94.

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First he excepts from his approval "the rage of a barbarian wolf flock," and the "habitual restlessness or rapine of mountaineers," and "the occasional struggle of a strong, peaceful nation for its life"—a strange exception that—and the "contest of merely ambitious nations for extent of power"—a wide exception that. It leaves him three kinds of beneficial war : war for exercise or play, out of mere high spirits and unused energies of the upper classes—war for aggression against surrounding evil—and wars for defence of noble institutions and pure households.

I. As to wars for pastime, we find that they are to be fought somewhat in the manner of duels or tournaments by the officers ; by the idle young men who are too proud for peaceful business, and whose arms and legs want play. There is to be no gathering of peasants to fire into one another ; and Carlyle on the thirty peasants from Dumdrudge is helpfully quoted, from *Sartor Resartus*. The man who could quote that to Woolwich students could do most things with an audience. We next have a little paragraph thrown in on Arbitration. "Grant," he says sarcastically, "that no law of reason can be understood by nations ; no law of justice submitted to by them ; and that,

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while questions of a few acres and of petty cash, can be determined by truth and equity, the questions which are to issue in the perishing or saving of Kingdoms can be determined only by the truth of the sword, and the equity of the rifle.”¹ I doubt if any one has ever had the ear of that audience of thoughtless aspiring soldier students to an Arbitration argument, before or since. He proceeds to wash his hands wholly of modern war.

“If you have to take masses of men from all industrial employment,—to feed them by the labour of others,—to provide them with destructive machines varied daily in national rivalry of inventive cost ; if you have to ravage the country which you attack—to destroy, for a score of future years, its roads, its woods, its cities and its harbours ; and if, finally, having brought masses of men, counted by hundreds of thousands, face to face, you tear those masses to pieces with jagged shot, and leave the living creatures, countless beyond all help of surgery, to starve and parch, through days of torture, down into clots of clay—what book of accounts shall record the cost of your work—what book of judgment sentence the guilt of it ? ”²

¹ § 98.

² § 102.

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Methinks it sounds not unlike a Peace Address.

II. We pass next to wars of aggression against evil—and the lecturer spends powerful pages on the selfishness and faithlessness of ambitious warlike kings ; on the common degradation of the idea of power ; and on the need for concentrating all our energies on home reforms. We are warned against supposing that a big nation is a strong one, bade to aim at union of hearts rather. “ Only that nation gains true territory which gains itself.” “ A nation,” he proceeds, “ does not strengthen itself by seizing dominion over races whom it cannot benefit.” “ Whatever apparent increase of majesty and of wealth may have accrued to us from the possession of India, whether these prove to us ultimately power or weakness, depends wholly on the degree in which our influence on the native race shall be benevolent and exalting.”¹

He nevertheless believes that the rule of England is for the good of the subject races, is a national duty and a piece of self-sacrifice and world service, the English white man's burden. He has an eloquent passage on this subject in his Inaugural Lecture at Oxford, beginning “ Reign

¹ § 115.

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or die." His hostility to the Manchester School comes out in his characteristic style. "I tell you that the principle of non-intervention, as now preached among us, is as selfish and cruel as the worst frenzy of conquest, and differs from it only by being not only malignant, but dastardly." "Within these last ten years, we English have, as a knightly nation, lost our spurs : we have fought where we should not have fought, for gain ; and we have been passive, where we should not have been passive, for fear." ¹ I am indeed much afraid that this, spoken in 1865, has generally been the case throughout our history.

III. As to wars for defence: Ruskin principally devotes himself to attacking the essential slavery of military obedience : he will have no mercenary standing armies, only unprofessional citizen armies for defence.

So he ends with fatherly counsel to his hearers to be industrious and serious minded, not to bet, to be pure and honourable, and reverent towards all women ; and the ladies present he exhorts to wear black whenever there is war, that so, by their influence, there may be no more wars.

¹ § 116.

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There you have a summary of the famous lecture on War in the *Crown of Wild Olive*, which has weakened Ruskin's influence with many of his friends, and done undoubted harm. But I call it on the whole a peace address given by a man who combined with his hatred of violence and ruin a certain attachment to picturesque mediævalism. The wars of Arthur or Roland were his ideal. He recognized the heroism and self-abandonment of such soldiers as he had read about all his life in Homer and Scott. But our modern wars include everything he hated ; they are wars for trade and for gain, sordid and financial in origin and sordid and financial in results.

Ruskin explains his attitude quite clearly in the Appendix to the *Crown of Wild Olive*, at the beginning of his notes on the Political Economy of the Kings of Prussia.

“ I am often accused of inconsistency ; but believe myself defensible against the charge with respect to what I have said on nearly every subject except that of war. It is impossible for me to write consistently of war, for the groups of facts I have gathered about it lead me to two precisely opposite conclusions.

“ When I find this the case, in other matters,

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I am silent, till I can choose my conclusion : but, with respect to war, I am forced to speak, by the necessities of the time ; and forced to act, one way or another. The conviction on which I act is, that it causes an incalculable amount of avoidable human suffering and that it ought to cease among Christian nations ; and if therefore any of my boy-friends desire to be soldiers, I try my utmost to bring them into what I conceive to be a better mind. But, on the other hand, I know certainly that the most beautiful characters yet developed among men have been formed in war—that all great nations have been warrior nations—and that the only kinds of peace which we are likely to get in the present age are ruinous alike to the intellect and the heart.

“ The last lecture in this volume, addressed to young soldiers, had for its object to strengthen their trust in the virtue of their profession. It is inconsistent with itself, in its closing appeal to women, praying them to use their influence to bring wars to an end. And I have been hindered from completing my long intended notes on the economy of the Kings of Prussia by continually increasing doubt how far the machinery and discipline of war, under which

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they learned the art of government, was essential for such lesson ; and what the honesty and sagacity of the Friedrich who so nobly repaired his ruined Prussia, might have done for the happiness of his Prussia, unruined.

“ How far, in the future, it may be possible for men to gain the strength necessary for kingship without either fronting death, or inflicting it, seems to me not at present determinable. The historical facts are that, broadly speaking, none but soldiers, or persons with a soldierly faculty, have ever yet shown themselves fit to be kings ; and that no other men are so gentle, so just, or so clear-sighted. Wordsworth’s character of the Happy Warrior cannot be reached in the height of it but by a warrior ; nay, so much is it beyond common strength that I had supposed the entire meaning of it to be metaphorical, until one of the best soldiers of England¹ himself read me the poem, and taught me, what I might have known, had I enough watched his own life, that it was entirely literal.”

By extending his soldierly qualification to “ persons with a soldierly faculty,” he gives the case away. For that can only mean the faculty of courage, organization and command. These

¹ Sir Herbert Edwardes.

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qualities a peaceful ruler like William Penn possessed in striking measure. The whole passage is the record of a swaying contest between sentiment and conviction ; between the glamour of the glowing haze of distant tradition and actual facts, only too closely pressing upon mankind to-day.

Truly the question of the effect of war on character is vital. I had written here, in pre-war days, some observations upon it ; but they seem to me now faint and platitudinous. We have had since then such widespread experience of the play of character faced with the dread calamity of the world-war, that it is too complicated to treat briefly. We are all saddened and wearied. So I leave it to the experience of the millions who know more about it from their own experience than I do.

We need not wait for war to harden our fibre and stiffen our backs. Surely this can be done without wholesale demoralization and destruction. Are there not national evils to be fought ? privations to be endured here in fighting vice, ugliness and disease, or in voluntarily participating in poverty ? There is courage needed to stand against public opinion and to lead it, to sacrifice wealth and social repute if required. These

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things are what we must turn to for the exercise of the courage and unselfishness of the soldier. We want more strenuous asceticism of a form not so essentially unreasonable and destructive as war.

It would entirely overload this chapter to give any idea of the vigour and number of the passages in *Fors* which storm against war :—" storming " is generally the method, varied, as usual with this master of fancy and emotion, with stinging sarcasm and mocking raillery. The burden of his plea throughout is that " the game of our nobles and the gain of our usurers " is war.¹

" When you have got the Devil well under foot in Sheffield, you may begin to stop him from persuading my Lords of the Admiralty that they want a new grant, etc., etc., to make his machines with. . . . The fiend sees that he can blind you, through your lust for drink, into quietly allowing yourselves to pay fifty millions a year, that the rich may make their machines of blood, and play at shedding blood." ¹

" In this contest (of poor and rich) assuredly, the victory cannot be by violence ; every conquest under the Prince of War

¹ LXXIV, vol. vii. p. 42.

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retards the standards of the Prince of Peace.”¹

He quotes² from the *Daily Telegraph* the following from its description of the capture of Paris : “ Each demolished house has its own legend of sorrow, of pain, and horror ; each vacant doorway speaks to the eye, and almost to the ear, of hasty flight, as armies of fire came—of weeping women and trembling children running away in awful fear, abandoning the home that saw their birth, the old house they loved—of startled men seizing quickly under each arm their most valued goods, and rushing, heavily laden, after their wives and babes, leaving to hostile hands the task of burning all the rest. When evening falls, the wretched outcasts, worn with fatigue and tears, reach Versailles, St. Germain, or some other place outside the range of fire, and there they beg for bread and shelter, homeless, foodless, broken with despair. And this, remember, has been the fate of something like a hundred thousand people during the last four months. Versailles alone has about fifteen thousand such fugitives to keep alive, all ruined, all hopeless, all vaguely asking the grim future what still worse fate it may have in store for them.”

¹ Vol. vii. p. 344.

² Letter II, p. 17.

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The following passage is interesting, however feeble it may appear in view of our recent developments of war:—

“ We fight inelegantly as well as expensively, with machines instead of bow and spear ; we kill about a thousand now to the score then, in settling any quarrel—(Agincourt was won with the loss of less than a hundred men ; only 25,000 English altogether were engaged at Crécy ; and 12,000, some say only 8,000, at Poitiers) ; we kill with far ghastlier wounds, crashing bones and flesh together ; we leave our wounded necessarily for days and nights in heaps on the fields of battle ; we pillage districts twenty times as large, and with completer destruction of more valuable property ; and with a destruction as irreparable as it is complete ; for if the French or English burnt a church one day, they could build a prettier one the next ; but the modern Prussians couldn't even build so much as an imitation of one ; we rob on credit, by requisition, with ingenious mercantile prolongations of claim ; and we improve contention of arms with contention of tongues, and are able to multiply the rancour of cowardice, and mischief of lying, in universal and permanent print ; and so we lose

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our tempers as well as our money, and become indecent in behaviour as in raggedness.”¹

“The first reason for all wars and for the necessity of national defences, is that the majority of persons, high and low, in all European nations, are Thieves, and in their hearts, greedy of their neighbours’ goods, land, and fame. But besides being Thieves they are also fools, and have never yet been able to understand that if Cornishmen want pippins cheap, they must not ravage Devonshire—that the prosperity of their neighbours is in the end, their own also ; and the poverty of their neighbours, by the communism of God, becomes in the end, their own.” “And the guilty Thieves of Europe, the real sources of all deadly war in it, are the Capitalists—that is to say, people who live by percentages on the labour of others, instead of by fair wages for their own.”²

“There is no physical crime at this day, so far beyond pardon—so without parallel in its untempted guilt, as the making of war-machinery, and invention of mischievous substance. Two nations may go mad, and fight like harlots—God have mercy on them :—you, who hand them

¹ *Fors Clavigera*, vol. i. Letter IV, p. 18.

² Letter VII, p. 16.

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carving knives off the table, for leave to pick up a dropped sixpence, what mercy is there for you?"¹

"The men who have been killed within the last two months, and whose work, and the money spent in doing it, have filled Europe with misery which fifty years will not efface, had they been set at the same cost to do good instead of evil, and to save life instead of destroying it, might by this 10th January, 1871, have embanked every dangerous stream at the roots of the Rhine, the Rhone, and the Po, and left to Germany, to France and to Italy, an inheritance of blessing for centuries to come—they and their families living all the while in brightest happiness and peace. And now! Let the Red Prince look to it: red inundation bears also its fruit in time."²

He calls War "the moral organization of massacre, and the mechanical reduplication of ruin."³ "All the cruellest wars inflicted, all the basest luxuries grasped by the idle classes,

¹ Letter VII, p. 21. See also Letter XIV, p. 18.

² Letter XXXIII, p. 24. See also Letter XXXVII, pp. 19-23. LXV, p. 148. LXVII, p. 240. LXXIX, p. 183.

³ XLIV, p. 178.

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are thus paid for by the poor a hundred times over " (in interest on debt).¹

Thus Ruskin is to be found among the Peace advocates—uttering indeed the characteristic refrain of Christianity, and saying emphatically in *Fors*, in so many words, that we are not to avenge injuries. Yet he was altogether out of sympathy with the ordinary channels of such advocacy. Liberalism he loathed, democracy he utterly disbelieved in, John Bright was the object of his occasional angry or contemptuous reference ; anything that savoured of Manchester was condemned as tainted with political economy ; the British aristocrats, the present ones, not ones selected on new principles of excellence, but even the ones we have, were to be the leaders of a regenerated England, and fathers of the Fatherland. Liberty was a red rag to him ; he preferred the servitude of the shepherd dog to the freedom of the buzzing gnat :—and so he experienced the awkwardness felt by those who, having on some issue joined the party of reaction, have yet within them their old reforming zeal : for in reality Ruskin was an enlightened Socialist philanthropist.

For these reasons I fear that his peace influence

¹ See also *Munera Pulveris*, p. 46.

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has been very much neutralized and wasted ; and therefore I have had peculiar pleasure in bringing it out in this chapter.

All these extracts make it clear that the writer's hatred of modern war waged by multitudes of conscript or other soldiers, machine guns, and chemical explosives, was a constant horror to him ; and that his sentimental admiration for the feudal and Greek chivalry was an academic and otiose emotion, figuring appropriately as a propitiatory exordium to the young warriors of Woolwich, but otherwise not an influential part of his thoughts.

Nevertheless Ruskin was a devotee of the nobler type of imperialism. He lived before the sordidness of " Empire," and its taproot in High Commerce and Finance, had become as plain as they are to-day ; and before the series of wars of Empire-building had culminated in the struggle for power in the Near East, power whose pursuit formed the principal motive for the Great World War. The Inaugural Lecture at Oxford is the central expression of this imperialism, in its concluding paragraphs. There are kindred passages in *The Crown of Wild Olive*.¹ *A Knight's Faith*, the Life of Sir Herbert

¹ § 159.

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Edwardes of the Punjab, is written in the noblest imperialist vein. In this, though not in his economic teaching in general, Ruskin falls under the sentimental glamour of popular phrases, and loses touch with reality.

CHAPTER IX

MACHINERY

RUSKIN, as we have seen, was both a Conservative and a constructive Socialist. He hated the industrial developments which he saw around him—that which was called progress he saw to be full of evil, and he wanted to undo it. That made him a Conservative. But he had his own line of development, which was an idealized feudalism. What is there for us to learn now from either of these teachings, the negative Conservative cry against steam power and railways and bicycles, the positive advance towards Guild Socialism?

The pastoral happiness of peasant life Ruskin thought he found in Bavaria, in Savoy, in Tuscany. He never really lived among the peasantry, nor was he, the shy visitor to the best hotels, with his courier and his portfolio, accustomed to familiar intercourse, particularly on money matters, with the worthy sons and daughters of toil whose industrious and quiet lives he admired. Neither in England, Scotland, Ireland, nor the Continent

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can the "merrie England" ideal of peasant life ever have existed.

In Switzerland or France, where there have been since the Revolution no feudal landlords, it had a good chance; and also among the "statesmen" of Cumberland and Westmorland while they survived. The Canton Bern is to-day to the tourist's eye a happy and prosperous land, and the other Protestant cantons resemble it. But we know most about our own northern "statesmen"; the Swiss or French small proprietor's life must have been much the same as theirs. It was a hard, narrow life, absorbed in "money grubbing," which was in their case no fault but a chief virtue, being necessary to survival. If a statesman was of a large and genial nature, the public-house was his common resort; and most of the stocks of statesmen came to grief by the recklessness or misfortunes of one generation. The estate was first mortgaged and then foreclosed and sold. A succession of steady cultivators, careful of the pence, hardly ever succeeded in making a family well to do or even comfortable, with reserves to meet disaster. I speak here of my own forbears. The holdings were too small. They worked all day and every day, in all weathers, lived and slept in quarters

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not conducive to delicate sensitiveness of feeling. A big attic, separated by a curtain into two, was the sleeping place of the children and servants, if there were any.¹ Books, education, travel, were denied them. On a lower level is the life of the peasants of the Rhone Valley, in dirt and hopelessness and overwork. It makes for degradation. But where feudal landlords exist, as they do in most places, the case is worse. The condition of the peasantry of Eastern Europe has been brought before us since the War in the daily papers so vividly that none can miss it. The system has broken down in revolution. It appears to an astonished English public, that the mass of the people have lived under local tyranny and very near the margin of maintenance, in Russia and her border states, in Roumania, Poland, Hungary, Prussia, and in the Balkan lands. This is what we find before industrial development comes in. There is no need to dwell on the squalor, on the diseases, on the recurring famines, on the contempt of the proud. It transpires that the peasants to whom the land has now come by revolution, are described as so covetous, narrow and selfish—their trade their politics—that Socialists and idealists

¹ *Hawkshead*, by H. S. Cowper.

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are baffled by them. They will starve a city like Buda-Pesth or Petrograd, when their supplies are abundant. They do not seem capable at present of a national or international consciousness, nor of any true democracy larger than the village.

In England, too, the rustic life which the Industrial Revolution overthrew, was, in the landlord counties, servile and suffering. The wages and the politics of the South of England until recent times are survivals of the system.¹

We are bound to conclude that to this system we ought not to recur. With all their faults and disadvantages the people of the industrial districts are the most educated, the most independent, the most virile. Numerous economic writers have destroyed, like a sentimental mirage, our view of the old English village, with its homely comfort and peaceful independence. We think more now of its toils, its diseases, its infant mortality, its lost Commons.

It was natural for Ruskin, with his love of white thatched cottages and leafy lanes bordered by neglected wasteful hedges full of wild flowers—with his wealthy upbringing, and ignorance of the value of money and of the direness of most

¹ v. *The Rural Labourer*, by Mr. and Mrs. Hammond.

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people's need of it, it was natural and inevitable that he should loathe the dreadful new mining villages—rows of cheap insanitary brick houses—and the belching smoke of the colliery chimney. He preferred Coniston to Barrow. But there is no practical guidance in that revolt, except indeed the revolt itself ; and that was a message to his time, and is still a message to ours.

There is nothing particularly elevating about farm work, in spite of Corydon and other shepherds described by the town bred makers of fantasies. Sheep are the most unpleasant creatures to look after, the dirtiest and the stupidest. Their scab, fluke, ticks and footrot need much attention. Apart from their diseases, the scene of the shepherd's happy labours will be in winter a turnip field, the crop being eaten off by sheep. The dirt and squalor of the dung and the animals and the turnips, the cold and damp, the sleet and the mud and the smells—these things are not good subjects for poetry. The farmer's calling is to make his living out of the death of his animals, and out of their sufferings when alive, their castration and imprisonment, and their labour. He measures them by a purely economic test. It is not for us who live on meat and milk, butter and cheese, and the products of

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the pig-sty, to blame farmers for this. They do it for us. But it is not particularly "improving"; it approaches the calling of the butcher, which is equally necessary. Why the world is thus built is not, luckily for me, the subject of this book.

The rest of the labours of the farm are a struggle with the earth—with weeds and with weather. It is all primitive and built into the bone and marrow of the race; but it is not more moralizing, nor more romantic, in practice than working at looms or ledgers. The labourer does not go to the land as to a leisurely summer home. Hitherto, no way has been found in England for inducing young people to stay in the villages. We ought to try to succeed in this. If we do it will be in a new kind of village, and it will be effected by cheap and rapid transit, and by widely scattering the ownership or holding of land. Then Ruskin's aims will be realized, but not by the only methods he could see in his day. In fact, railways and domestic machinery would be essential.

Division of Labour goes with the factory system. It was early hailed as one of the great economies obtained by production on a large scale. It was found that by constantly keeping

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a man or a child to one occupation, an extraordinary degree of sure accuracy and readiness was obtained. Without the necessity for thinking, and so without risk of thinking wrong, the nimble fingers repeated hour by hour their appointed trick, the practised eye ever followed the same mechanism and stopped it at the same point, the same tool in the same place was ready to the same hand. Physiologically we believe that all this means that there is established a rut for the tracks of the brain wheels, a habitual nervous connection between certain sensory centres and certain motor centres, without the need for every piece of news to be transmitted by the sensory centre to the central thinking apparatus in the cerebrum, and a corresponding order sent down from the central control to the motor centre.

When we learn to write, the fashion and shape of every *a*, *b* and *c* have to be thought over ; the hands learn painfully to follow an order sent down from the central thinking power in the cerebrum, sent down on information derived through the sensory centres behind the eye, of the shape of the copy. But in ordinary life we could copy pages of manuscript and talk and think about something else the whole time.

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There is a direct line of nerve flow between the reading apparatus behind the eye and the writing apparatus behind the hand; and thought is not required. We have become so far automatic; we have created a convenient writing machine within us, which works for us and leaves us free to do other things.

So that if we spend our nine hours a day at working a printing machine, or stitching leather or silk, or boring holes, or driving in nails, or sharpening a tool's edge, or wrapping boxes, or counting or piecing threads, we are really doing the work of a machine. We do not think : to think would interfere with the sure regularity of our work.

Now the growth of this division of labour has been quite irresistible. Its advantages have been such that no manufacturer or nation of manufacturers could stand without it. The social organism has become more complex, and with that the differentiation of function has become more marked. It is a necessary accompaniment of an elaborate social state; and whether it tends or not to the welfare of the individual it greatly extends the productive power of the industrial organism, and so strengthens the organism itself viewed as in-

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dustrial simply. Thus the highly differentiated organism has survived, though it may have sacrificed the individual worker, regarded as a human being. Is there, therefore, any means whereby we can modify the work of the monotonous mechanical labourer so as to give him some pleasure in it, and afford exercise to his other faculties besides that one called out by the single narrow function he has learnt to repeat day after day? If we can give scope for his higher faculties, his judgment, his invention, his knowledge, we shall be avoiding the present waste by which faculties which might aid production in better ways are wasted on routine.

The greatest cure hitherto found is inherent in the system itself. For when the work is such that it is done by a human machine, the step is not far distant when a machine will be actually invented, with a surer grip of the material, a readier tool for piercing, a straighter edge for cutting. This process is going on in every department of manufacture. Boards are planed, picture frames carved, table legs made, mouldings cut by machinery. Watches and sewing machines are made of interchangeable parts, each the product of a machine. The only limit to the taking over of every manufacture by

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machines seems to be that a large output is necessary to make it pay to invent and manufacture and sell costly machines. So great have been the triumphs of many-fingered machinery that we are not inclined to limit them. Thus, most of the monotonous, and most of the physically laborious work is done by the man of steel. For every textile operative in the country rather more than one horse power is provided by steam ; which is equal to the strength of ten adult men. Self-feeding furnaces are similarly saving of human flesh and eyesight. Thus our manual workers have largely become makers and minders of machines. To help to make a machine, to watch and repair it, and take care of it—even to understand it and to feed it, is a not unworthy form of labour. To care for a complex machine requires intelligence and a wide-awake sense of responsibility. It is much better, at any rate, than hand-loom weaving was, or than nail-making by hand, or match-box-making is. Even so mechanical a task as working a sewing machine, poor as it is, may be a trifle less soul-destroying than working with a needle at plain sewing all day. And though minding looms is monotonous, yet they turn out so much more cloth per operative, that the evil of monotony of which

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we speak is probably a very small percentage per yard produced, of what it was when weaving was done in the weavers' cottages by hand.

It is therefore in extending machinery for all articles which have no individual artistic value that we shall get rid of most of the lower and more degrading forms of labour—machinery for ploughing, sowing, reaping, binding, thrashing, dairying, laundry work, baking, cooking, cutting straight and smoothing clean, grinding and polishing, and for the processes of printing. These are true friends of man.

It is to be noted that every increase of the gross output which machinery enables man to produce, increases the demand for the more skilled portions of the work, for those which require judgment and character. The multiplication of the printing output of the country has increased the number of writers, of reporters, of proof-readers, of overlookers, and of men who can tastefully arrange a title page. It has also multiplied the demand for men who can draw, can photograph, or can reproduce illustrations. Similarly the "hands" who work the machines on a farm are fewer but are probably more intelligent than the agricultural labourer in a backward country.

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It will be observed that this inquiry has left untouched and unaffected—

1. The skilled artistic crafts where a sense of the beautiful and a special value in human thought goes to each article.

2. The mass of unskilled and unspecialized labour at the bottom of the social ladder which division of labour and machine production leave largely untouched.

To the cleansing, quieting, moralizing of machinery, then, not to its extinction or supersession, social reformers should apply themselves. To the compulsory consumption of smoke, to sanitary factories and workshops, to the substitution of gas or electricity for steam, we must look with hope.

Therefore, out of the industrial hurly-burly, we must look forward, not back—accept the industrialization of the world which marked the nineteenth century, and go on to find a home for humanity in it. It is a world phenomenon, and it is the result of one thing, the exploitation of coal.

It is in the abuse of this very coal, on which all manufacturing and transport depends, that the most obvious wrong has been done to humanity. The first condition of human happi-

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ness to-day is to be found in the abolition or sufficient abatement of smoke, so keeping our skins and clothes clean.

This is all on Ruskin's lines ; very central to the preservation of all he loved. How pervasive was this enemy he did not fully see fifty years ago. He noted the deterioration of climate in England, during his lifetime, in two lectures on *The Storm Cloud of the Nineteenth Century*. They were much derided at the time ; and they contain curious passages in which the lack of light, the restless ugly clouds, the choppy breezes, the cold gloomy summers, were put down to the wrath of heaven for the sins of the people. They had in fact one simple explanation—Smoke. A man of Ruskin's power of perception, constantly admiring beauty of landscape, could hardly have been wrong in his impression, fortified by his diaries, that there had been a change for the worse in the air and skies during his lifetime. The production of manufacturing smoke over a third (say) of England covered that period. Over all our coal fields solid particles embarrassed the air currents, and darkened the sky, and the oily products adhered stickily to the clouds and to the rain. The weather was, in truth, nature's punishment for the haste, the

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greed, the popular carelessness, which tolerated the factory and furnace chimneys, and the ill-regulated firesides of thirty-five millions of people in the British Isles.¹

Coal ought not to be burnt raw, any more than meat should be eaten raw. It should be made into gas, coke, tar and sulphate of ammonia—and all of it be used. A smokeless domestic fuel made of half coked coal could be made in all gas works, and should be used everywhere, to economize our now costly coal. Electric power stations, smokelessly operated, would save much wasteful private production of power. More rigid and conscientious smoke inspection, abandoned as unpatriotic on a short view during the war, should be restored. The law should be amended and its loopholes fastened up.² There are many beautiful inventions ready to be used to make an end of this most gratuitous of our evils, which renders life in the industrial districts dark, dirty and ugly to the best and

¹ This explanation of the Storm Cloud I gave in my book on Smoke, *The Destruction of Daylight* (1907, now out of print). It was accepted by the Editors of the Library Edition of Ruskin's works. Vol. xxxiv. p. xxvi.

² A Local Government Board Departmental Committee was sitting on this before the war. It has resumed its sittings under the Ministry of Health.

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cleanest of the workpeople. Most municipalities in England impose an extra rate on those who use gas and electricity by taking money for the rates from those departments.

We condemn the town cottage housewife to ceaseless toil, with her dirty doorstep and window sills, her kitchen floor, her children who play in the street, and her intolerably swollen laundry. The glorious light of the country summer is never seen through the smoke haze of the industrial districts. Look down any long straight town street on any day, and note the limit of visibility. Fogs are often caused and always aggravated and prolonged by smoke—and after every long fog the death rate from lung diseases goes steeply up. Among the many signs of government incompetence, of narrow popular apathy, and lack of a true political sense, the present riotous licence of the makers of smoke is conspicuous. And the reform is all on Ruskin's lines.

After dirt, drink. They are not unconnected ; for the dull grey street, the worried wife, the ill-tempered children, all tend to tempt a man to the cosy blaze of the bar-room, and to the excitement of a shilling on the next race. Men and women will make life interesting somehow,

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and if they are denied the sound pleasures appropriate to their natures they will find others.¹

We will now hear the Prophet on our machine civilization. The passages are in the famous chapter on *The Nature of Gothic* in the Second Volume of *The Stones of Venice* §§ XI, XII, XIII and others. These passages are among Ruskin's earliest social writing. He was led from the examination of the characters of Byzantine, Gothic and Renaissance architecture, to inquire into the character of their builders ; and so was led from Art to Man as the subject matter of his life-work. This is an important transition passage, written about 1850, ten years before the decisive year when he became an economist always and an Art Professor at intervals.

§ XI. "The modern English mind . . . intensely desires in all things, the utmost completion or perfection compatible with their nature.

¹ Other passages on Smoke may be found in *Fors*, Letter XLIV, § 13 ; Letter XLVI, § 10 ; Letter LX, § 3 ; Letter LXXXI, § 17 (in a letter from Mr. Horsfall) ; in a youthful reference in *The Poetry of Architecture*, chap. v. § 63 ; *Modern Painters*, vol. iii. chap. 13. § 14 ; vol. v. pt. ix. § 24 ; *The Queen of the Air*, Preface (a beautiful passage) and I. 8 ; *Ariadne Florentina*, vi. § 221 ; S. Mark's Rest, vi. § 76 ; *The Art of England*, vi. § 184 (a strong passage) ; *Aratra Pentelici*, iv. § 132 ; *Arrows of the Chace*, ii. p. 181 ; Letter printed in Library ed., vol. xxix. pp. 574-6, called "Morning Thoughts at Geneva," intended for *Fors*.

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This is a noble character in the abstract, but becomes ignoble when it causes us to forget the relative dignities of that nature itself, and to prefer the perfectness of the lower nature to the imperfection of the higher ; not considering that, as judged by such a rule, all the brute animals would be preferable to man because more perfect in their functions and kind, and yet are always held inferior to him, so also in the works of man, those which are more perfect in their kind are always inferior to those which are, in their nature, liable to more faults and shortcomings. For the finer the nature the more flaws it will show through the clearness of it ; and it is a law of this Universe, that the best things shall be seldomest seen in their best form. The wild grass grows well and strongly, one year with another ; but the wheat is, according to the greater nobleness of its nature, liable to the bitterer blight. And therefore, while in all things that we see or do, we are to desire perfection, and strive for it, we are nevertheless not to set the meaner thing, in its narrow accomplishment, above the nobler thing, in its mighty progress ; not to esteem smooth minuteness above shattered majesty, not to prefer mean victory to honourable defeat ; not to lower the level

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of our aim, that we may the more surely enjoy the complacency of success. But, above all, in our dealings with the souls of other men, we are to take care how we check, by severe requirement or narrow caution, efforts which might otherwise lead to a noble issue ; and, still more, how we withhold our admiration from great excellences, because they are mingled with rough faults. Now, in the make and nature of every man, however rude or simple, whom we employ in manual labour, there are some powers for better things : some tardy imagination, torpid capacity of emotion, tottering steps of thought, there are, even at the worst ; and in most cases it is all our own fault that they *are* tardy or torpid. But they cannot be strengthened, unless we are content to take them in their feebleness, and unless we prize and honour them in their imperfection above the best and most perfect manual skill. And this is what we have to do with all labourers ; to look for the thoughtful part of them, and get that out of them, whatever we lose for it, whatever faults or errors we are obliged to take with it. For the best that is in them cannot manifest itself, but in company with much error. Understand this clearly : You can teach a man to draw a straight line, and

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to cut one ; to strike a curved line and to carve it ; and to copy and carve any number of given lines or forms, with admirable speed and perfect precision ; and you find his work perfect of its kind : but if you ask him to think about any of those forms, to consider if he cannot find any better in his own head, he stops ; his execution becomes hesitating ; he thinks, and ten to one he thinks wrong ; ten to one he makes a mistake in the first touch he gives to his work as a thinking being. But you have made a man of him for all that. He was only a machine before, an animated tool."

§ XII. "And observe, you are put to stern choice in this matter. You must either make a tool of the creature, or a man of him. You cannot make both. Men were not intended to work with the accuracy of tools, to be precise and perfect in all their actions. If you will have that precision out of them, and make their fingers measure degrees like cog wheels, and their arms strike curves like compasses, you must unhumanize them. All the energy of their spirits must be given to make cogs and compasses of themselves. All their attention and strength must go to the accomplishment of the mean act. The eye of the soul must be bent upon the

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finger point, and the soul's force must fill all the invisible nerves that guide it, ten hours a day, that it may not err from its steely precision, and so soul and sight be worn away, and the whole human being be lost at last—a heap of sawdust, so far as its intellectual work in this world is concerned ; saved only by its Heart, which cannot go into the form of cogs and compasses, but expands, after the ten hours are over, into fireside humanity. On the other hand if you will make a man of the working creature, you cannot make a tool. Let him but begin to imagine, to think, to try to do anything worth doing ; and the engine-turned precision is lost at once. Out come all his roughness, all his dulness, all his incapability ; shame upon shame, failure upon failure, pause after pause : but out comes the whole majesty of him also ; and we know the height of it only when we see the clouds settling upon him. And whether the clouds be bright or dark, there will be transfiguration behind and within them.”

§ XIII. “ And, now, reader, look around this English room of yours, about which you have been proud so often, because the work of it was so good and strong, and the ornaments so finished. Examine again all those accurate

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mouldings, and perfect polishings, and unerring adjustments of the seasoned wood and tempered steel. Many a time you have exulted over them, and thought how great England was, because her slightest work was done so thoroughly. Alas! if read rightly, these perfectnesses are signs of a slavery in our England a thousand times more bitter and more degrading than that of the scourged African or helot Greek. Men may be beaten, chained, tormented, yoked like cattle, slaughtered like summer flies, and yet remain, in one sense, and the best sense, free. But to smother their souls within them, to blight and hew into rotting pollards, the suckling branches of their human intelligence, to make the flesh and skin, which after the worm's work on it, is to see God, into leathern thongs to yoke machinery with—this it is to be slave masters indeed ; and there might be more freedom in England, though her feudal lords' lightest words were worth men's lives, and though the blood of the vexed husbandman dropped in the furrows of her fields, than there is while the animation of her multitudes is sent like fuel to feed the factory smoke, and the strength of them is given daily to be wasted into the fineness of a web, or racked into the exactness of a line."

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§ XV. “. . . It is not that men are ill fed, but that they have no pleasure in the work by which they make their bread, and therefore look to wealth as the only means of pleasure. It is not that men are pained by the scorn of the upper classes, but they cannot endure their own ; for they feel that the kind of labour to which they are condemned is verily a degrading one, and makes them less than men. . . . In all ages and in all countries reverence has been paid and sacrifice made by men to each other, not only without complaint but rejoicingly ; and famine and peril and sword and all evil and all shame have been borne willingly in the causes of masters and kings ; for all these gifts of the heart ennobled the men who gave, not less than the men who received them, and nature prompted and God rewarded the sacrifice. But to feel their souls withering within them, unthanked, to find their whole being sunk into an unrecognized abyss, to be counted off into a heap of mechanism, numbered with its wheels, and weighted with its hammer strokes—this nature bade not—this God blesses not—this humanity for no long time is able to endure.”

§ XVI. “ We have much studied, and much perfected, of late, the great civilized invention

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of the Division of Labour ; only we give it a false name. It is not, truly speaking, the labour that is divided ; but the men :—Divided into mere segments of men—broken into small fragments and crumbs of life ; so that all the little piece of intelligence that is left in a man is not enough to make a pin, or a nail, but exhausts itself in making the point of a pin or the head of a nail. Now it is a good and desirable thing, truly, to make many pins in a day ; but if we could only see with what crystal sand their points were polished,—sand of human soul, much to be magnified before it can be discussed what it is—we should think there might be some loss in it also. And the great cry that rises from all our manufacturing cities, louder than their furnace blast, is all in very deed for this—that we manufacture everything there except men—we blanch cotton and strengthen steel and refine sugar and shape pottery—but to brighten, to strengthen, to refine or to reform a single living spirit, never enters into our estimate of advantages. And all the evil to which that cry is urging our myriads can be met only . . . by a right understanding on the part of all classes, of what kinds of labour are good for men, raising them, and making them happy ; by a determined

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sacrifice of such convenience or beauty or cheapness as is to be got only by the degradation of the workman, and by equally determined demand for the products and results of healthy and ennobling labour."

§ XVII. "And how, it will be asked, are these products to be recognized, and this demand to be regulated? Easily: by the observance of three broad and simple rules:

"1. Never encourage the manufacture of any article not absolutely necessary, in the production of which Invention has no share.

"2. Never demand an exact finish for its own sake, but only for some practical or noble end.

"3. Never encourage imitation or copying of any kind, except for the sake of preserving records of great works."

This magnificent passage, central as to Ruskin's teaching and very typical of the literary power with which his spirit was armed, is probably of more value as a principle than as a specific cure. We can without great difficulty obey this three precepts, and do some good thereby. We can avoid mere meretricious glory of finish; we can choose our purchases so as to favour originality, when we are buying articles in gold or silver or glass or bronze or leather or porcelain

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or wood ; but the great mass of the evil remains untouched. How are we to cultivate invention when we buy a mackintosh, or a pair of boots, or common crockery, or pens and paper—and even in an article so full of inventions as a bicycle, the invention is not due to the mechanic who makes it. We are not really carried much beyond the æsthetic furnishings of our existence. So far, however, the advice is excellent and human ; it is likely to lead persons of moderate means to prefer the products of Switzerland or Japan, hand made and invented, to the machine products of Birmingham.

There must be always a measure of tedious soul killing work to be done ; and few entirely escape it. Our professions, as well as our trades, let alone manual occupations, do us some harm, narrow our outlook, make us peculiar. I am told that even teachers can be recognized as such, and the weighty medical manner is well known. You can neither serve behind a counter nor occupy a pulpit without some of the manner of it becoming part of yourself. Even so, the day labourer suffers from the lack of intelligence he is called upon for. We must all find the balance outside our work. By the reasonable shortening of hours, even the

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dull routine labourer may have a chance of exercising his faculties as a man. The fact that labour is specialized and monotonous constitutes the proper physiological reason for the eight hour-day or shorter hours still in some trades. Moreover, to do the dull rough work of the world, there is no denying that there are annually born a certain number of dull but strong people, whose gifts lie in the absence of thinking. They are born into all classes, unfortunately ; but born they are. But Ruskin is fully alive to this solution of the ultimate difficulty, and frequently alludes to it.

“ It is in the wholesome indisposition of the average mind for intellectual labour that due provision is made for the quantity of dull work which must be done in stubbing the Thornaby wastes of the world.”¹

“ I have said . . . that the rough and worthless may be set to the roughest and foulest work, and the finest to the finest ; the rough and rude work being, you will in time perceive, the best of charities to the rough and rude people.”²

Moreover, a measure of routine labour is good,

¹ *Fors*, XCV, vol. viii. p. 258.

² *Id.*, LXXXII, vol. vii. p. 306. A similar solution is outlined in Letter XVIII of *Time and Tide*.

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as recreation, for us all—it is a relief from thinking, planning, inventing. Good spade and hatchet work, if only one can perspire enough over it, is a condition of good work in higher ways. Ruskin thinks so too, and set the Oxford undergraduates to their famous road-making for exercise ; surely the greatest academic triumph a professor ever achieved.

Ruskin's attack on Machinery, when carefully read, applies only to steam machinery, with its soot, smoke, sulphurous gases and noise. Wind or water power he allows and encourages ; a vast scheme of mills worked by tidal water power is outlined in *Fors.*¹ And oddly enough he prophesies, so long ago, that electricity will supersede steam ; and therefore if we can generate electrical energy with very much less publicly vomited smoke than we now make for steam power, we shall be on right lines, and shall have the Master's goodwill. Not by vain retrogression, but by determined reforms on possible lines may we some day get back an England good to live in. At present we are wasteful and dirty, and we do not care.

Ruskin writes : “ What is required of the members of St. George's Company is, not that

¹ Letter LI, p. 85.

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they should never travel by railroads, nor that they should abjure machinery, but that they should never travel unnecessarily, or in wanton haste ; and that they should never do with a machine what can be done with hands and arms, while hands and arms are idle.”¹

There is no subject which causes more merri-ment amongst the Philistines than Ruskin’s objection to railways, combined with the frequent locomotion indulged in by his most devoted followers. But Ruskin’s objection to railways was never so absolute as was popularly supposed. He always approved of them on through main routes, and only objected to their intrusion into the peace of quiet valleys off the main tracks. He objected to what appeared to him the excessive provision by which a lovely valley was spoiled “in order that every fool in Buxton could be in Bakewell in half an hour.” We must remember that the railway mania of 1844 occurred when Ruskin was five and twenty, at the formative period of his life, and that he saw all around him rough destruction of that beauty which affected his soul with a thrill like a lover’s (as he tells us in the Third Volume of *Modern Painters*, pages 295–298, quoted in Chapter I). The

¹ *Fors*, Letter XLIV.

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countryside must have been sadly ruined in the forties, while the railway embankments were creeping along through the pastures.

Possibly not all of us know the remarkable passage in the *Cestus of Aglaia* in praise of a locomotive :¹

“ I cannot express the amazed awe, the crushed humility, with which I sometimes watch a locomotive take its breath at a railway station, and think what work there is in its bars and wheels, and what manner of men they must be who dig brown ironstone out of the ground, and forge it into that ! What assemblage of accurate and mighty faculties in them ; more than fleshly power over melting crag and coiling fire, fettered, and finessed at last into the precision of watchmaking ; Titanian hammer-strokes beating, out of lava, these glittering cylinders and timely-respondent valves, and fine ribbed rods, which touch each other as a serpent writhes, in noiseless gliding, and omnipotence of grasp ; infinitely complex anatomy of active steel, compared with which the skeleton of a living creature would seem, to a careless observer, clumsy and vile—a mere morbid secretion and phosphatous drop of flesh ! What would the men who

¹ Library ed. vol. xix. p. 61

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thought out this—who beat it out, who touched it into its polished calm of power, who set it to its appointed task, and triumphantly saw it fulfil this task to the utmost of their will, feel or think about this weak hand of mine, timidly leading a little stain of shadow of something else—mere failure in every motion, and endless disappointment ; what, I repeat, would these Iron-dominant Genii think of me ? and what ought I to think of them ?

“ But as I reach this point of reverence, the unreasonable thing is sure to give a shriek as of a thousand unanimous vultures, which leaves me shuddering in real physical pain for some half minute following ; and assures me, during slow recovery, that a people which can endure such fluting and piping among them is not likely soon to have its modest ear pleased by aught of oaten stop, or pastoral song. Perhaps I am then led on into meditation respecting the spiritual nature of the Tenth Muse, who invented this gracious instrument, and guides its modulation by stokers’ fingers ; meditation, also, as to the influence of her invention amidst the other parts of the Parnassian melody of English education.”

He further concedes that “ steam, or any

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mode of heat power, may only be employed, justifiably, under extreme or special conditions of need ; and for speed on main lines of communication, and raising water from great depths, or other such work beyond human strength." This is a very large concession, and may be received with large gratitude. He even permits steam machinery for such purposes as "the deepening of large river channels ; changing the surfaces of mountainous districts ; irrigating tracts of desert in the torrid zone ; breaking up and thus rendering capable of quicker fusion, edges of ice in the northern and southern Arctic seas, etc., so rendering parts of the earth habitable, which hitherto have been lifeless." ¹

The teaching of Ruskin is not really revolutionary in immediate practice ; he advises a manufacturer to go on using his machinery ; he merely wants us to set our faces towards the restoration of nature's gifts of beauty and peace to the lives of toilers ; and for ceasing to uproot sentiments of cleanliness, reverence and order by unnatural, foul, crowded and vulgar surroundings. His tastes and instincts are vehemently against machinery ; but his actual requirings are moderate.

¹ *Munera Pulveris*, i. p. 16.

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It is the machine-made society we live in that distresses him, and distresses us ; its occasional rough coarseness, its physical ill-health. There are, of course, scattered through *Fors* many outbursts against machinery in general, not so carefully limited as his more weighty pronouncements. In Letter V, pp. 10, 11, for instance, the assertion is made that a man and his family can, by their own labour, given land, feed and clothe themselves without machinery ; and that therefore all labour-saving appliances are so many aids to idleness. I do not know where is the proof or disproof of the assertion. All we know is that savage tribes do so live, but no others, and that it is in the time and strength saved from labour for sheer food and clothing that the best activities of humanity find room : and that civilization began with the existence of a leisured class.

And now, turning to the human product of industrialism, we will take a sober view, not debiting to the factory system the evils which are inherent in human nature, but only those due to crowded town life and to employment in large rooms full of noisy machinery. If we have cured the smoke evil, and reduced hours to

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their present reasonable length, what remains to be done, and will it be on Ruskin's lines?

South Lancashire is often taken as the type of industrial England. There I was born and brought up, and I have lived there for the greater part of my life. I have known very intimately a great many of the working people. They are far more pale and undersized than they ought to be. Their beauty has been taken from them. The half-time system, now perishing, has interfered with their education. The damp atmosphere in the hot rooms is bad for their lungs, and minding machines is utterly monotonous. But they are excellent people—they will stand comparison with the upper classes. There is every type, of course, they are as varied as are men at the Universities, or as the ladies who go to any Church. But, speaking as we must, in general, there is a level of conduct and intelligence in those mean streets, not different except in manner from that of the suburbs. The degeneracy is, I believe, only physical, so far as it is to be debited to the conditions of their work.

This bad physique is a real evil. The lack of room for cricket and football, the remoteness

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of the fields and woods, the ugliness of the grey streets, the lack of quiet, added to the humid factories and the smoke, have produced this. Parks and playgrounds and all sorts of open spaces, including extensive fields and woods and ponds accessible on a half-holiday, should be provided far more than they have been, and should be less doctored by parks' superintendents.

Then there is a great sphere of service open to the familiar agencies for good. The Drink traffic should be curtailed, and put out of the reach of private profit, and better opportunities for sociability, music and dancing, provided, not as part of the bait of the drink seller, but by a democratic municipality. The usefulness of picture galleries will not be fully reached till oral teaching about the pictures is added, and the great educational value of comparatively cheap coloured reproductions is perceived. Into the work of founding the Art Museum in Ancoats, a working class district of Manchester, on exactly these lines, Mr. Ruskin threw himself heartily. It was indeed an inspiration derived from his writings by Mr. T. C. Horsfall which caused that Museum to be founded. It has recently been taken over by the Corporation.

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Solemnly, then, and with due fear and doubt, considering the horror and difficulty of the case, let us resolutely set ourselves to see if, under the world of machinery, we can live good and healthy lives. The present products of our civilization are far from satisfactory to any of us. Are the crowds of girls who rush forth from the factory when the hour of freedom strikes, having pieced threads in a hot damp atmosphere, and shouted across the whirl of wheels all day to one another—are they on the way to make fit, self-respecting and physically strong wives and mothers and trainers of children? There are some three hundred thousand of these girls in the Lancashire factories, who will be mothers of a million English babies. Or take the young men. Go by a football train on a Saturday afternoon, when holiday is written on every bloomless and vulgar and swaggering young face :—what do you hear and see as you crowd fifteen to a carriage? Bets, ribaldry, ill nature, the carriage floor a mess, the whole scene an explosion of pent-up spirits of self-assertion and banal hilarity.¹

¹ *Fors*, xi. pp. 3-7, on the navvies on the way to Furness Abbey.

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These young people are undoubtedly products of the age of machinery ; but for machine production they would never have been born, nor their surroundings formed ; but the question is, cannot their tastes and characters be reformed even while they remain machine-hands ? Are not excellent lives possible, and healthy surroundings obtainable, in industrial England ? For factory life we can confidently point to such. Bournville, New Earswick, Port Sunlight, and of an earlier date, Saltaire, Bessbrook, and some other centres which have not a special local name, show that the thing can be done. For colliers the case is harder. There are colliery villages on the Tyne which once ran extension lectures ; but the villages themselves are horrible. There are good colliery villages near Doncaster, one built round a private Park. Collieries have special difficulties. The coal mine will not last for ever ; and when it is worked out the houses may become useless. They are therefore built to last only for from thirty to fifty years. They are erected all at one time ; and large rows of houses exactly alike are the cheapest. They are often outside any municipality with its possibly watchful surveyor and

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inspectors. They are completely owned by the colliery company, which has no competitor as landlord. It is the classic case in England of the failure of pure competition to care for human welfare.

EPILOGUE

I AM kindly permitted by the Council of the Society for Psychical Research to reprint here the beautiful tribute by F. W. H. Myers, which appeared in their *Journal* for March, 1900 ; and has been reprinted in Mr. Myers's *Fragments of Prose and Poetry*, pp. 89-94.

Ω οὔτος, οὔτος, Οἰδίπους, τί μέλλομεν
Χωρεῖν ; πάλαι δὴ τὰπὸ σοῦ βραδύνεται.

Ruskin, then, has sunk to rest. The bracken and bilberries of the Lake-land which he loved so well have hidden the mortal shape of the greatest man of letters, the loftiest influence which earth still retained ;—have enwrapped “the man dear to the Muses, and by the Nymphs not unbeloved”—

τὸν Μώσαις φίλον ἄνδρα, τὸν οὐ Νύμφαῖσιν ἀπεχθῆ.

We may rejoice that the long waiting is over ; but memory all the more “goes slipping back to that delightful time” when he was with us in his force and fire ; when it was still granted

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to hearken to his utterance ; to feel the germ of virtue quickened by his benignant soul. For those who had the privilege of knowing Ruskin, the author came second to the man ; and in this brief notice of his Honorary Membership of our Society I may perhaps be pardoned if I dwell in reminiscence, without attempting any formal review.

I met him first in my own earliest home, beneath the spurs of Skiddaw,—its long slopes “bronzed with deepest radiance,” as the boy Wordsworth had seen them long since in even such an evening’s glow. Since early morning Ruskin had lain and wandered in the folds and hollows of the hill ; and he came back grave as from a solemn service from day-long gazing on the heather and the blue. Later came many another scene ;—pacings in the Old Court of Trinity with Edmund Gurney, who met those generous paradoxes with humorous play ; graver hours at Oxford, in the sick-room of the Duke of Albany, who, coming back to earth-life from perilous illness, found nowhere a guidance fitter than Ruskin’s for eager and royal youth.

But chiefliest I think of him in that home of high thoughts where his interest in our inquiry first upgrew. For the introduction to the new

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hope came to him, as to Edmund Gurney and to myself, through a lady whom each of us held in equal honour ; and it was on the stately lawns of Broadlands, and in that air as of Sabbatical repose, that Ruskin enjoyed his one brief season,—since the failure of his youthful Christian confidence—of blissful trust in the Unseen. To one among that company a vision came, as of a longed-for meeting of souls beloved in heaven, a vision whose detail and symbolism carried conviction to Ruskin's heart. While that conviction abode with him he was happy as a child ; but presently he suffered what all are like to suffer who do not keep their minds close pressed to actual evidence by continuous study. That impress faded ; and leaving the unseen world in its old sad uncertainty, he went back to the mission which was laid on him,—that mission of humanizing this earth, and being humanized thereby, which our race must needs accomplish, whatever be the last doom of man.

Earth fills her lap with pleasures of her own ;
Yearnings she hath in her own natural kind ;
And even with something of a Mother's mind
And no unworthy aim,
The homely Nurse doth all she can
To make her Foster-child, her Inmate Man,
Forget the glories he hath known,
And that imperial palace whence he came.

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But Ruskin's task,—however it might be pursued in forgetfulness of that unrememberable home,—was surely still the task (as Bacon called it) “to prepare and adorn the bride-chamber of the mind and the universe”; and that *melior natura* which seemed to be Ruskin's, as it was Bacon's, divinity has never shone more radiantly upon the inward shrine of any lover of men. It was half in jest that I would complain to him that to Earth he gave up what was meant for Infinity, and bent a cosmic passion upon this round wet pebble of rock and sea. “Ah, my friend!” he answered once when I spoke of life to come, “if you could only give me fifty years longer of this life on earth, I would ask for nothing more!” And half that season was granted to him, and all in vain;—for what Tithonus may tread for ever unweary the “gleaming halls of Morn”?

Then as that fervent life wore on, Ruskin turned more and more from the outward pageant to the human passion; from Alp and sunset to the sterner beauty of moral law. From the publication of *Unto This Last*, one may trace that slow-growing revolt against the Age which led him to preach in the end with such despairing emphasis the duty of protest, of renunciation, of sheer self-severance from most of the tendencies

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of modern life. The strength of this emotion in him was made, I remember, strangely plain on one occasion, when some of those who cared most for him had clubbed together, at Lord Mount-Temple's suggestion, to surprise him, on his recovery from a serious illness, with the present of a picture of Turner's, which he had once possessed and still dearly loved, but of which he had despoiled himself to meet some generous impulse. Never were givers more taken aback by the issue of their gift. For the sudden sight of the lovely landscape hung in his bedroom drew from him a letter of almost heart-broken pain,—at the thought that those whom he would so fain have helped,—who were thus willing to do this thing, or almost anything, to please him,—were yet not willing to do that other thing for their own souls' sake ;—to come out from the iniquity,—to shake off the baseness of the age,—to bind themselves in the St. George's Guild with that small remnant who clung to things pure and true.

Indeed, there was something naïve, something childlike, in his Brotherhoods, his Leagues, his solemn Covenants against the onflowing tide of things ;—but a stern reality beneath all this became strongly present to us then ;—a deep

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compassion for the lonely heart, which so much needed love, yet could scarcely accept a fellowship in love which was not also a fellowship in all that he held for virtue.

There are some who fear lest too pervading a belief in that other world may make men indifferent to the loveliness and irresponsible to the woes of *this*. Yet must that needs be so? or might we not treat even this world's problems with steadier heart, could we regain,—from some surer foothold in the Invisible,—that ancient serenity of the Saints? Watching that ardent soul, whose very raptures trembled on the brink of pain, I have thought that even from Ruskin's delight in Nature something of a bitter yearning might have been soothed away, could he have seen in stream and moorland, nay even in

great Skiddaw's self, who shrouds
His double head among Atlantic clouds,
And pours forth streams more sweet than Castaly;—

could he have seen, I say, in these, as Plato saw in Castaly or in Hymettus, only the transitory adumbration and perishing symbol of somewhat more enduring and more fair. Nay, even from his compassion for stunted and erring souls might not the burning pain have gone, could he have seen those souls as Er the Paphlagonian

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saw them, marshalled in an everlasting order, of which but a moment's glimpse is shown ;—till even “ this last ” of men shall follow out, through all vicissitude, his endless and his mounting way ?

And turning then, with heart full of such-like fancies, to that well-loved Leader's fate ;—imagining his baffled isolation, and the disheartenment of solitary years ;—I have pictured him waiting in the Coniston woodlands, as *Œdipus* in *Colonus'* grove,—waiting in mournful memory, in uncomplaining calm—till he should hear at last the august summons,—nay, sounded it not like the loving banter ?—of the unguessed accompanying God. “ Come, *Œdipus*, why linger on our journey ? Thou hast kept me waiting long.”

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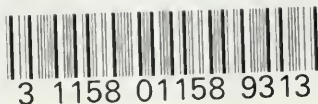
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